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Looks like it just did



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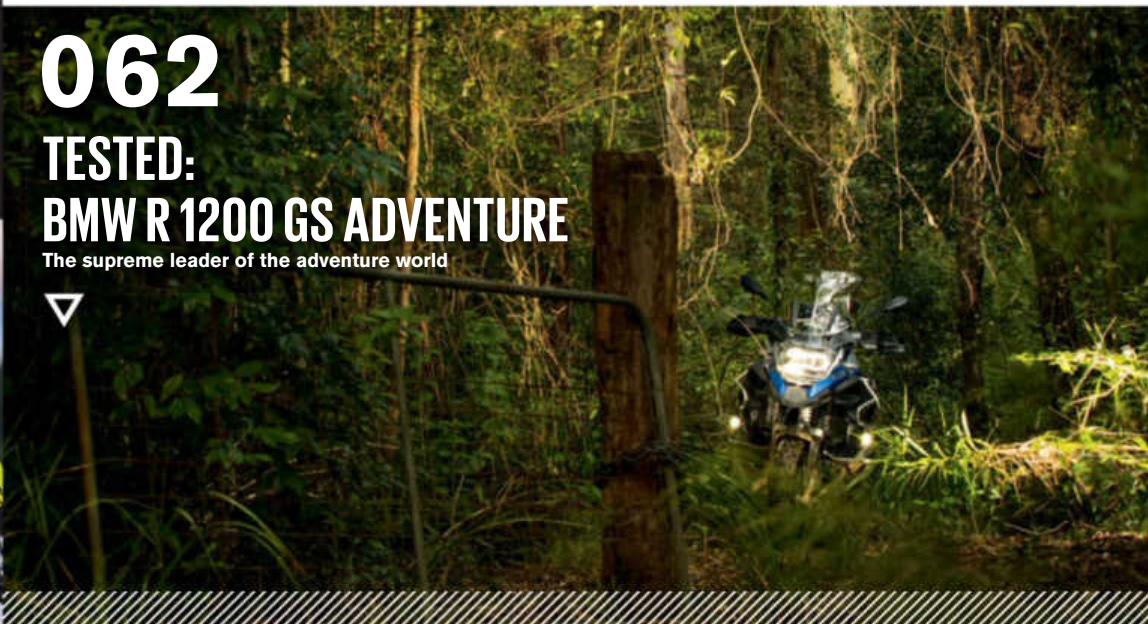


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PHOTO: Matt Bernard





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with Damien Ashenhurst

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# POWERBAND BRAIN

**T**oo much of my average day makes no sense to me. It may be because I'm a simple man with a very basic thought process, but I go through my day wondering about so many incidental things that my brain never really has a quiet moment.

I wonder if I'm alone or do other people think about stuff like how did two echidnas make it the 12,000 or so kilometres from Australia to the Middle East to get on Noah's ark and then come back again when the flood was done? Their legs are only about an inch long and they're not renowned swimmers.

I can't understand why my shampoo has "nourishing lipids" in it. What the hell is a lipid? Can you over-lipid your hair to the point where you're just crawling with lipids?

And what's with this Paleo diet shit? The Paleolithic period was around 2.5 million years ago. Our ancestor of the time was called Australopithecus and he was basically marginally smarter than a monkey. Why would I want to eat what he ate? You can buy paleo sausages – I'm pretty sure old Australopithecus wasn't eating sausages. Eggs are a part of the diet but there weren't even chickens 2.5 million years ago. It's a marketing ploy to

suggest that going back to basics – and then back about another 2 million years – would be good for you. This stuff just shifts me no end.

I think this is why I love bikes so much. There's no bullshit on a bike because you can't hear anything anyone is saying and you can't read moronic scaremongering Facebook posts about the end of the world while you're riding. You can only hear what the bike is saying and if you don't give it your full attention it will slap you like a cranky, old-school grandma.

The front page of a national newspaper some time ago broke the earthshattering news that Jamie Packer had a new girlfriend. Someone at that office decided that this was the most important news that happened from across the entire Earth that day. But shift from second to third on a YZ250 as a track opens up and feel the engine come on and I guarantee that even if a Packer was courting an alien you wouldn't give it a second thought because the bike is all that matters in your world right then and there.

There's something about riding that frees your mind. Play a game of cricket and you could write an entire movie script before a ball comes anywhere near you. Basketball players get subbed off, footy

players have interchange and soccer players roll around on the ground like petulant three-year-olds denied a new Pokémon toy. But on a bike you think about riding and you can't clock off.

The next corner, the gear shift, braking, getting the front over a log, rut position, ducking a branch and up-ramp speed – this can all be within 100 metres.

What so many people who don't ride can't understand is the total immersion riding demands and it doesn't matter how fast you are, it's all relative. Some of us have to concentrate at low speeds and some at high speed but the result is the same: we all go to that place in our heads where social media, cooking shows, newspapers, arguments, lipids and power bills go away and the bike occupies our minds. It's rarely thought of as a thinking sport but it certainly is. Lose concentration and you might use that as your first excuse in hospital.

I don't think about Muslims, Christians, Labor, Liberal, gay marriage, asylum seekers, school fees, exchange rates, Kim Kardashian or African dictators on my YZ and if the whole world could just take a few hours a week to clear its head like we all do it'd be a more peaceful, stoked-on-life planet. **DAI**

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# TOM PAGÈS

PHOTO RED BULL PHOTOFILES

Whenever freestyle feels like it's falling off the radar, someone comes along and kicks it up a gear. Tom Pagès is that man right now. What he's doing on a bike in competition is mind blowing and that he's doing it with consistency shows just how far ahead of the curve this guy is. Pagès has always had it in him but we're seeing it in full effect now and the sport will never be the same.









# HOMeward BOUND

## CDR YAMAHA HAS ANNOUNCED THE MAJOR SIGNING OF DEAN FERRIS FOR 2016

Next year will see the homecoming of Australian Dean Ferris, following three years competing on the World MXGP circuit. Ferris made the announcement as he competed for Australia at the MXoN in France in late September. The 24-year-old had a strong season in Europe, finishing 11th in the MXGP and challenging some of the best riders in the world.

Ferris will join the CDR Yamaha team contracted to compete in the 2016 MX Nationals, the NZ MX Championships and the Australian Supercross Championship.

"I'm really looking forward to getting back home and racing in Australia again," he said. "I've done three years in Europe and a season in the US and, while I've enjoyed every moment of it, there's nothing like racing in Australia and living back at home in Kyogle.

"Working with the CDR Yamaha team and racing the YZ450F is equally exciting. I first started my professional career on Yamaha as part of the Yamaha Junior development program back in 2007 and then had a great season with

Dixon Yamaha in Europe in 2013, so I feel like it's a return home in more ways than one.

"The CDR Yamaha team have proved over the years to have the bikes, staff and know-how to win races and championships and that's exactly the kind of team I want around me.

"As soon as I'm finished with my commitments in Europe, I'll be heading home and getting to work on bringing CDR Yamaha and myself some championship wins in 2016."

CDR Yamaha owner Craig Dack is extremely excited to work alongside Ferris in 2016 and is hopeful of a long-term partnership: "Dean has all the qualities I look for in a rider. He has skill, drive, talent and a determination to succeed at almost any cost and when we first reached out to Dean it was obvious we were both on the same page in our racing goals.

"In the past, we've had incredible success in working with riders like Dean who have returned from overseas and are mature in the way they approach their racing. I think he'll be a perfect fit for both the YZ450F and the CDR Yamaha team and we look forward to what he brings to not only CDR Yamaha but to the domestic racing scene in 2016."



## NEW PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

# 100% AIRCRAFT MTB HELMET

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— **ADAM CIANCIARULO**



"TELL ME WHY U NEED PINNED  
4TH-GEAR JUMPS ON A 450?  
WATERED TAKEOFFS AND  
LANDINGS? NO NEED FOR GOOD  
RACING. ONLY HOSPITALS FILL  
THEIR WALLETS!"

— **MARC DE REUVER**



"I LIKE THE START! HOW ABOUT HANDING  
OVER A MILLION TO THE ACTUAL WINNER?  
NOT SOME LAME 'MUST WIN ALL 3'"

— **CHAD REED ON THE MONSTER ENERGY CUP**



"30 years around moto and  
I had to make my first 911  
call on Tuesday. So glad my  
best mate is OK after a nasty  
crash. Heal up @byrner26."

— **Chad Reed**

## DIRT ACTION'S TWEETS ABOUT THE ISDE DEBACLE

"Tony Abbott to appeal his  
disqualification from Prime  
Minister to the FIM."

“FIM NOW  
CONSIDERING  
WHETHER TO ALLOW RIDERS  
TO JUST TAKE A SHUTTLE  
BUS FROM TEST TO TEST.  
#ISDE #CHECKPOINT”

“‘Checkpoint’ —  
it's French for  
'Why bother?'"

"LOOKING FORWARD  
TO THE CONCLUSION  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
SIX WEEK ENDURO.  
#CHECKPOINT #FIM"



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## SCOTT BISHOP

### BIO:

Scott Bishop is the most experienced dirtbike test dummy in Australia and perhaps the world. He's tested everything that's won, lost, blew up, blew smoke, holeshot or high-sided since DIRT ACTION began. These days Scott runs the GYTR Yamaha Yamalube race team in the MXD class and spends his time building bikes and riders.

### FOLLOW

 GYTRYamaha  
 @gytr\_yamaha\_team

# MANAGER'S MONTH

**T**he past couple of months have been the time when race team managers earn their keep.

Unfortunately, the world of big, plush offices, first-class airfares and banging trophy girls just doesn't exist any more — they're the riders' department these days.

But around September and October, while we're still deep into racing, the wheels of next year start to turn with sponsors, riders, budgets and staff all being investigated and plans laid. The real work of a manager now is to get the season off to a smooth start and ensure everyone on the team kicks off in the right fashion.

### MANAGER'S ROLE

It's not just booking flights and rental cars. This time of year, there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work securing team sponsors for next year and negotiating with riders both new and current as well as getting the right people in place for their positions the following season.

As a rider, I hated this time of year as I had to sit down and try to sell myself to sponsors. I don't really enjoy talking about myself but it got easier as time went on as the majority of people knew who I was and friendships were formed. I tried to stay with sponsors as long as possible because that way each year would almost take care of itself.

As a manager, it's somewhat easier as it's not about me; it's about the team. As long as you have a good reputation and present in a professional fashion, the Australian Moto Industry is very good at supporting racers and race teams. The difficult part is trying to secure a rider and match them with a sponsor, as often a high-profile rider can bring extra benefits but the rider won't sign until they have the products and money they want while the sponsor won't commit until they're sure the right rider is on board. It's like the United Nations of office motocross.

Once all that's in place, arrange the new bikes, parts and accessories required as well as testing days and travel plans, then you're away. To me, it's still not a real job and I've never had a real job in my life so I don't plan on getting one now.

### RIDERS & TEAMS

A lot of people ask why this rider went to that team, or why this team wanted that rider. It's not always as easy as it seems as

you have to ensure the rider's a good fit for what your team goals are. In my situation, managing teams of younger riders, it's about what potential you see in them and if they're serious about making a living racing a dirtbike. For the senior team, it's usually driven by results as they and their sponsors want an immediate impact. To me, the bottom line in racing is you need the right rider at the right time and to surround them with the right people. If you don't have all of that, you won't win. There have been plenty of examples of teams having the right rider but at the wrong time when injury, maturity or plain old bad luck gets in the way.

**"THIS TIME OF YEAR, THERE IS A LOT OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES WORK SECURING TEAM SPONSORS FOR NEXT YEAR AND NEGOTIATING WITH RIDERS BOTH NEW AND CURRENT AS WELL AS GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN PLACE FOR THEIR POSITIONS THE FOLLOWING SEASON"**

### WHAT A MANAGER LOOKS FOR

When I look at riders, I assess them over a full body of work, not just one race or one race meeting. You look to see how they ride different surfaces and different weather conditions, whether they can adapt quickly to tracks, who they hang out with and how they present. Most importantly, you look at if they're determined enough to become a champion. And with the current racing environment, the MX Nationals is the highest-profile championship we have, so a rider strong in motocross is preferred over a supercross specialist.

I usually have riders I watch over a long period of time to see how far they have progressed and if joining our team would help them become a better rider. I also think longer term as I don't want to invest a heap of the manufacturer's money into a rider who I don't think has the potential to continue his career further than my team.

When I choose a rider, I do it with the

view that, in time, Serco Yamaha would be interested in them. I ask myself, "Where will we be in 12 months' time if I sign this rider?" My answer has to be a better team with a better rider or we're wasting time and money.


We also talk it over as a team after the list is narrowed down. I have great people on my team and they may see things that I don't and take into account the workload of the team — no point getting a rider if the workload they bring is too much or too demanding for our situation. Some personalities will clash, some will refuse to work within a team environment and others won't want to run the products you have as they may have run something else when they were younger. The bottom line for a rider is the team has this set out for you and you can't come in and change everything. Embrace the team, embrace the people in it and work hard to get the best results you can.

I also see our team as an Australian development team: it's our job to work with the best Australian talent, not bring in a rider from overseas. We still have plenty of talent here and I hope other manufacturers continue to try and develop it as well.

### WHAT THE RIDER SHOULD LOOK FOR

It should never be the biggest-budget team just because it has money. If the JDR KTM teams of a few years ago taught us anything it was that throwing money at it doesn't win you championships. They had all the trimmings, a heap of staff and great bikes but still didn't get a huge amount of success.

Look for a team that has good people in it who work hard and are passionate about their jobs. Look at how they work and the quality of their bikes, both in terms of performance and durability. Look at the sponsors and make sure they're products you are happy to use. Don't get deeply involved in a team if you have an issue with the tyres they run or the products they use. The team wants to be there long after you've gone and, if you don't like what they have, it isn't the team for you.

With racing, if you do your job well, the money you make will be more than enough and there's still a good living to be made racing motocross in Australia. Sure, it's not the US, but a top guy here can still earn a few hundred thousand dollars a year and that can't be that bad, can it? 



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# 2016 WR450F

## BREAKS COVER!

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BASHER IS BACK IN  
THE MIX**

In 2013, Yamaha gave its tired WR450F a huge makeover and sales figures showed that the redesign was a success. Though an excellent trail bike, it was hampered by weight from ever becoming a popular race bike.

Last year saw an impressive rethink of the somewhat clapped-out WR250F, taking a bike on the verge of irrelevancy back to the top in terms of capability and sales.

And now, after much anticipation and the prayers of fans to the Blue Gods, a new WR450F has been

unveiled and what we see is a development arc much the same as the WR250F.

Based on and developed alongside the 2016 YZ450F, the new WR-F has a solid base to work from and has benefitted from the touch of the great Josh Coppins. Beau Ralston took his YZ450F to a class win in the 2015 AORC series so the DNA is there for a great bush bike and going on what we received with the 250 we have every reason to be keen.

At the time of writing the details were all yet to be released but we know the '16 will run the same EFI as the YZ-F but with revised settings. The new model runs with higher second, third and fourth gears – first and fifth remain the same – as well as a new clutch.

Australia will receive the bike with black rims and Metzeler 6 Days tyres. Of course, it will also be completely ADR compliant and compatible with the excellent Yamaha Power Tuner.

We suspect we'll see the 2016 WR450F right up the front through the AORC season and KTM's stranglehold on the season will be tougher than ever to maintain, what with Toby Price absent and the Active8 and CDR Yamaha teams hungry for wins.

### 2016 WR450F MODEL OVERVIEW

- All-new enduro/rally model benefitting from the latest Yamaha technologies



A big part of why the WR250F works is the excellent frame; the 450 should be no different

- Industry-leading reversed-engine layout
- Aggressive & modern YZ450F-inspired so-called "rightfully wrong" design
- Compact, mass-centralised design delivers light & agile handling feel
- New 44mm throttle body with revised fuel injection settings
- Enduro-spec radiators with lightweight cooling fan
- Newly designed electric starter
- Wide-ratio 5-speed transmission & light enduro clutch



The now-familiar reverse-cylinder engine is a design Yamaha is surprised others haven't followed

It's finally arrived! The previous model was good but, for many, missed the mark



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The ADR-compliant PR5 Enduro features Delphi EFI, six-speed and thermo fan kit as standard and retails for \$7795 plus on-roads.

The air/oil-cooled PR4 240 Extreme has been competing successfully in various extreme enduro events in Europe, most recently finishing Romaniacs in the Silver class.

For the shorter riders out there, the PR3 240 Enduro Pro, featuring fully adjustable suspension, disc brakes all round, low seat height and electric and kickstarter as standard, ensures confidence and easy riding.

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For more information visit [www.ajpastralia.com.au](http://www.ajpastralia.com.au).



## AJP MOTORCYCLES HIT AUSSIE SHORES

# DREAM BECOMES A REALITY

## CALEB WARD SIGNS WITH KTM FOR THE 2016 SEASON

KTM Australia has announced it will expand to two classes for the 2016 season with the addition of Caleb Ward in the MX2 category. The young rider has had an extremely successful 2015 season, including a four-round winning streak.

"It's pretty awesome," Ward said. "This is something I've dreamt of since I was a little fella riding KTM 50s and 65s and stuff."

"It's always been the dream to be on the KTM team. I've always looked up to the guys that were on the team, like Todd Waters who grew up near me, so it's been one of my goals for a long, long time."

"So to finally be on the team is pretty cool, that's for sure. Danny and Rob T and everyone, they really helped Todd out a whole heap and I think everyone who's been on the team — like Gibbs, Styke — everyone seems to go there and really progress a lot. I think it will definitely help me out a whole heap and I should learn heaps."

Ward had a troubled start to the 2015 season when he missed rounds two and three with a knee injury. On return, the 18-year-old

had an immediate impact, building a reputation on sandy tracks and proving his worth against older, more experienced riders. Having signed on with KTM for 2016, Ward is looking to become a more complete package and already has his eye set on a national championship.

"Hopefully I'll put all the pieces together and get a championship next year," Ward commented. "I'll have access to a whole lot more different parts and a lot more time for testing and it will all make a huge difference."

"The bike will be amazing, I think. Obviously I haven't ridden a full factory bike before but there's so many more different parts and things that'll be on it that it will make a massive difference, so I'm really, really keen to get on the bike. The 2016 models are meant to be really awesome just from standard, so I think with all the bits and pieces it will be amazing!"

Ward will join Australian MX1 champion Kirk Gibbs and Luke Styke in the 2016 team. The KTM riders will be a great influence on the young gun, providing a wealth of experience and knowledge.





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# T H E \_ C H A M P ' S R I D E

KIRK GIBBS HAS RISEN TO THE TOP OF AUSTRALIAN MOTOCROSS IN 2015. WE HAD THE CHANCE TO TAKE THE 2016 KTM 450SXF THAT CARRIED HIM THERE FOR A FEW LAPS

STORY SHANE BOOTH PHOTOGRAPHY MATT BERNARD

---

KTM returned its racing program in house for 2013 after several years partnering with the JDR Motorsports outfit. Since the move they'd managed strong results but the championship has eluded them.

For 2015, KTM has returned to the top and it's a credit to the program how quickly it's managed to do so. There's a very experienced crew of staff behind the scenes, including technical-guru-turned-team-manager Rob Twyerould.

They downsized in some ways while going to a more concentrated effort in the MX1 class with a smaller truck and a two-rider lineup. The effort has paid off and they can now lay claim to the number-one plate for the 2015 MX1 MX Nationals Championship.

---







## THE BEAST\_

There's something about this bike that feels special. KTM seems to have a very open racing program when it comes to sharing parts and information between countries.

There are some very impressive-looking parts fitted to this bike and you can tell they're of the highest quality with performance to match. There are sprinkles of carbon fibre paired up with a full chassis and engine titanium bolt kit, including axles and swingarm pivot bolt. I didn't put it on a set of scales but it definitely felt a little lighter when I lifted it off the stand, a combination of titanium parts that are visible and maybe some other lightweight parts that aren't.

The factory Brembo brake calipers are works of art and their performance matches their impressive look. The front caliper is paired up with an oversized KTM Powerparts brake rotor and you'd be hard pressed to convince me that there's a better brake package available — the feel and power the combo produces are second to none. The rear brake is also impressive. It's not so much about power but feel and this offers plenty.

**THERE ARE SPRINKLES OF CARBON FIBRE PAIRED UP WITH A FULL CHASSIS AND ENGINE TITANIUM BOLT KIT, INCLUDING AXLES AND SWINGARM PIVOT BOLT**







The controls are all at the level you'd expect on a bike like this: the throttle is silky smooth and the clutch light and progressive. The tyres connecting this thing to the track are Dunlop Geomax factory items, unfortunately not available to the general public but, lucky for me, the team fitted them to the bike for the test. They offer different compounds and construction to maximise grip and are designed for only professional racing and have a short lifespan. They work very well and in certain conditions are welcome additions to the package that offer some advantage over off-the-shelf tyres. The team runs heavy-duty tubes as opposed to solid mousse inserts but it was mentioned this may change for the 2016 season, as it's a relatively cheap insurance policy for the championship defence.

It's worthy to note that all of the accessories that you can see on the bike are available through KTM's Powerparts range, something the team and brand pride themselves on.

## KTM'S DANNY APRO

In terms of suspension, he usually likes a harder front end and a slightly lower rear end; he always likes the rear of the bike to be a touch lower than the front. Then, from an overall point of view, he likes the bike to be on the firmer side of things. Kyle Blunden works very hard on the ECU and the mapping of the bike to get the power delivery nice and smooth. The fuel injection makes that side of the bike so tuneable, so we spend quite a bit of time fine-tuning that. The way Kirk rides, he's always in third — never uses second gear — so we need third to pull from the word go. We don't want any

## ON GIBBSY'S BIKE

lag in third gear. We aim for an engine with a lot of torque so the bike works well for the way Kirk rides it — smooth and in high gears. We do all the engine work in-house. We have access to KTM motorsport parts, which we use some of, like pistons and a few other parts. The engines are completely built and assembled in-house. We usually get a few different parts to test, like cam shafts, so we build up a few engines and then test them and put our own little spin on it, if you like, to suit the individual rider. The bike also has a full titanium bolt kit including axles to help reduce weight.





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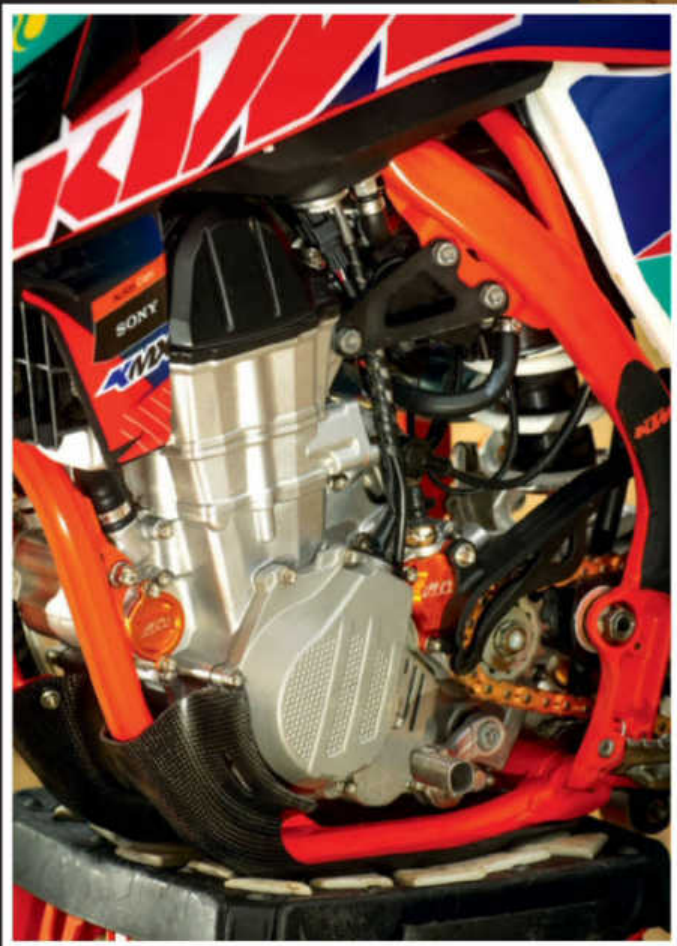
## SMOOTH IS FAST\_

It's no secret that Kirk Gibbs is a smooth operator who rides the bike in higher gears than most of his competitors, a technique that would seem to be successful and one that not too many riders have attempted to adopt.

So it's no surprise when I tell you the bike is a torque monster. I knew it would be; it's a 450 after all and they have plenty on tap from standard, but it's the way it's developed and delivered that's most impressive. Once you're underway you'll be hard pressed to know whether you're in third, fourth or fifth gear. The bike will pull just about any of them from

### KIRK GIBBS 2015 MX NATIONALS RESULTS

Horsham	1-1
Appin	3-2
Broadford	7-1
Murray Bridge	1-2
Coolum	4-1
Raymond Terrace	2-1
Shepparton	3-3
Nowra	5-4
Toowoomba	5-3
Coolum	3-7



## ONCE YOU'RE UNDERWAY YOU'LL BE HARD PRESSED TO KNOW WHETHER YOU'RE IN THIRD, FOURTH OR FIFTH GEAR

all but the tightest of turns — and in those, third gear is all that's required. You could take first and second out and put them in the bin. There's no hesitation in throttle response even when you're short-shifting and lugging the bike slightly in a higher gear.

The power is very linear in its delivery and rolls on in a way that makes it easy to ride. It's a setup that allows for energy-efficient riding. The bike doesn't launch out of your arms at any point in the power curve; it's just a strong constant acceleration right through to the limiter — which, by the way, you need never go near on this bike. This is an engine that would make plenty of riders jealous and it's worth remembering the team has had only a month or so to develop it, so I can imagine it will only get better.



## HOW'S IT HANDLE?\_

This was the first time I'd ridden a 2016 KTM and it did feel as though the bike was a very compact package — it took a little getting used to. The bike is fitted with WP 52mm cone valve forks and a WP Trax shock, for which the team develops settings locally.

The bike initially felt firm and that inspired confidence straightaway; to me that means you're not going to get caught out if you catch a bump a little hard and bottom the bike out. The bike sits slightly rear low, which the team confirmed was Kirk's preference. That style of setup is quite popular; it makes for a stable bike in a straight line and under brakes plus it generally means the bike will squat well off turns and provide excellent drive.

### KIRK GIBBS' KTM 450SXF

Engine: KTM

Ignition: GET

Fuel: ETS

Clutch: KTM

Clutch cover: GYTR

Exhaust: Akrapovic

Handlebars: Renthal Fatbar

Triple clamps: X-Trig

Front fork: WP 52mm Cone Valve

Rear shock: WP Trax shock

Grips: KTM

Front brake caliper: Factory  
Brembo

Front brake rotor: KTM Powerparts

Rear brake caliper: Factory  
Brembo

Rear brake rotor: KTM Powerparts

Rear disc guard: KTM Powerparts

Rear brake caliper guard: KTM  
Powerparts

Skid plate: KTM Powerparts

Seat cover: KTM Powerparts

Footpegs: Standard sharpened

Holeshot button: KTM Powerparts

Front wheel: KTM Powerparts

Rear wheel: KTM Powerparts

Front tyre: Dunlop Geomax  
Factory Tyre

Rear tyre: Dunlop Geomax  
Factory Tyre

Rear tube: Heavy Duty

Front tube: Heavy Duty

Rear sprocket: KTM Powerparts

Chain: EK Chain

Chain guide: GYTR



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The bike did all of those things well. One of the standouts for me was how well it got power to the ground off turns and the more speed carried, the better it felt. There can be a trade-off to the low rear and that's steering accuracy, but the team has the setup in hand: it felt good into tight ruts and I didn't have any issues with the bike feeling like a chopper.

There was a decent set of rolling, sand-style whoops and the bike handled the section very well, allowing confidence to build and more speed to be carried with every lap. The firmer forks helped through that stuff and also gave a nice positive feel under brakes — there's no excessive diving that makes you feel like you need to ease off on the lever.

Again, the team has had the bike for just a month or so at this point and felt the setup was good but they



were still learning a lot about the geometry and chassis changes the 2016 bike has. Naturally, with further development they'll improve it even more.

## PARK IT UP \_

This bike is impressive and it's only very early days as far as race team development goes. The team will be learning plenty as they spend more time on the bike and learn its individual traits.

Such smooth and strong power makes this 450 a pleasure to ride, different from what I think people assume a race team bike would be like. It's a package that obviously works very well for Kirk Gibbs and it will be a force to be reckoned with in the MX1 class for some time to come. **DAI**





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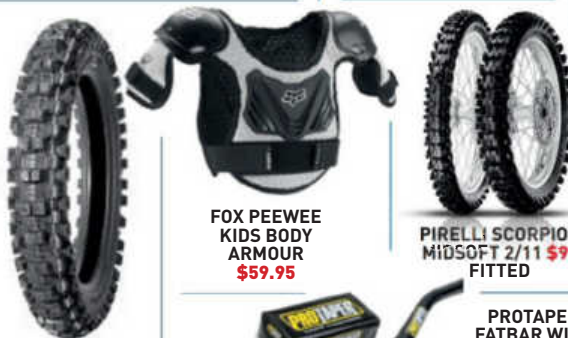
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# BEAU

# RALSTON

## FROM TRIPLES TO TREES, BEAU RALSTON MADE THE SWITCH TO OFF-ROAD TWO YEARS AGO AND ALREADY HAS A NUMBER-ONE PLATE

**I**t's hard to believe that 2015 was only Beau Ralston's second year racing the Australian Off Road Championship and first year on a team.

Coming from a motocross background, Ralston burst onto the off-road scene at the beginning of 2014 and raced to a fourth-place finish at the Sydney round of the now-defunct Australian Enduro-X Championship.

With another strong result, finishing second at the final round of the Enduro-X Championship in Queensland just a couple of weeks later, Ralston picked up a little support to

contest the entire 2014 AORC championship as a privateer. After Ralston again showed promising results in the AORC ranks – including class and outright podium finishes by the end of last year – Active8 Yamaha team manager AJ Roberts offered him a full-time ride for 2015 and the New South Welshman repaid AJ, the team and Yamaha with the E2 title.

Just days before he jetted out to Slovakia to represent Australia at the 2015 ISDE, we caught up with Ralston to talk about his amazing year to date.

STORY AARYN MINERDS PHOTOGRAPHY DAMIEN ASHENHURST





**ABOVE:** Beau (L) takes on calming words from team boss AJ Roberts during a Four Day tyre change

**FAR LEFT:** If you've got it, run it: Ralston's new number-one plate on show

**LEFT:** Beau hits berms and berms disappear



First up, Beau, how does it feel to win your first AORC title and your first senior national championship?

It felt great to win the E2 class, though in saying that I was working my arse off to try and become the outright champion and was always aiming for the outright win. I'm stoked to win an E2 title; I'm certainly over the moon with that. But at the same time I feel that I have a lot more to give and will be getting back to work to chase the outright title. While it's great to have the class title, I haven't made it yet. The outright title is the ultimate goal.

A national title in your second year racing the AORC is a mighty fine effort. Had you ever ridden any enduro type events before the start of 2014?

I raced my first-ever off-road event at the start of 2014 at the Sydney round of the Enduro-X championship. Last year I did that off my own back — I borrowed a bike from Graham Boyd Motorcycles for the two rounds of Enduro-X, then AJ was kind enough to help me out for the

rest of the year with a bike and gear and obviously the best advice that I could get in the off-road world. He believed in me enough after Enduro-X in 2014 to give me half a shot and to prove that I had the goods and I guess at the end of

last year, picking up a few outright podium results, he saw something in me and I was lucky enough to get a fulltime gig with him which I was stoked with.

It was great to be able to repay the team and Yamaha with winning a title this year. I didn't want to take up the opportunity and not have something to give back. I don't work hard every single day to not get the results that I feel as though I deserve and set out for myself.

How have you found the team environment at the Active8 Yamaha team? You guys always look like you are having fun, especially on race day.

The team is unreal; every weekend we're always taking the piss out of each other but there are no hard feelings. We're all there to help each other: if one guy's struggling the rest of the team pitch in to help him. Obviously, AJ, with his experience in the off-road world and all of his knowledge, is more than I could ever ask for in a team manager. There's no doubt that he teaches us a lot more than we could ever learn on our own — he really is unreal.

**I FEEL I HAVE A LOT MORE TO GIVE AND WILL BE GETTING BACK TO WORK TO CHASE THE OUTRIGHT TITLE**





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Something I didn't realise until recently is that you and your teammate Josh Green don't live too far from each other. Do you spend a lot of time training with each other? No, we don't, actually. I think this year when we've been at home we've ridden together maybe three or four times. With going away for all the races and then all the pre-running and testing for Finke and then Hattah, we spend nearly half the year together as it is, so when we get home we're both pretty much at the point where we're like, "I'm not going near him!" [laughs] It's only a matter of time before I'm spending another week or two together with him.

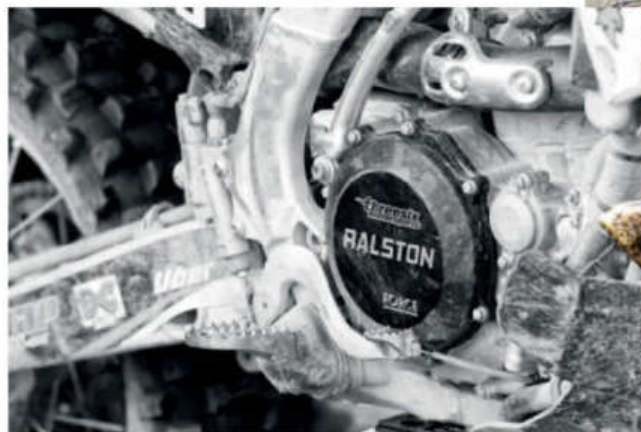
Obviously, with your great results you look to be enjoying life in the AORC. How have you found being in the AORC paddock in general?

I love the feel and being involved in the off-road scene and all the people involved are great — even the competitors. Because we're mainly racing against the clock there's really no bar banging or trying to take each other out and that type of stuff. We race against the clock and for the most part everyone's nice to each other and all the guys out there are real sportsmen; there's no hard feelings towards each other. Everyone gets along great — from the teams to the riders, it's really chilled out and laid back.

So not too many hassles adapting to bouncing off trees?

There's always trouble trying to go fast through this stuff and finding that next level, but I guess that's the same in everything, though — you're always looking to find the next level. It's been a learning curve; the tracks are always changing so much. It's not like you're doing lap after lap with 39 other riders — we do a lap then there's three to four hundred riders go through before you get to go again, all at different speeds and skill levels.

Added to that you usually have seven to eight minutes of track to remember on top of adapting to all the changes each lap with the ruts getting deeper, ruts getting blown out, new lines forming, lines you've ridden for three or four laps prior all of a sudden becoming slow or unrideable, rocks being pulled out of the ground and all that type of stuff. It certainly keeps you on your toes and it's still something I struggle with at the moment. I'm still learning and will be aiming to improve on that side of things going into next year.



## I WOULD SAY HANDS DOWN THAT HATTAH IS THE BEST RACE I'VE EVER DONE IN MY LIFE

As you said, it's only really your first full year in off-road and for an off-road guy you're still very young, so plenty of time to learn.

It's funny, from the way everyone speaks and coming from motocross it feels like I've been around forever, but I'm only 24 so hopefully I have a long time left and have plenty more titles to come.

TOP: Finke isn't for the timid and Ralston's finishes in the desert have been impressive

LEFT: The best part of the Ralston story is taking advantage of opportunity and giving 100 per cent

ABOVE: Off-road requires a new set of skills and Beau is learning them fast



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## IT'S UNREAL TO WIN A CHAMPIONSHIP, BUT TO SEE A SMILE ON MY DAUGHTER'S FACE IS EVEN BETTER

You won the E2 title but also had some great results at Australia's two big desert races this year, finishing seventh at Finke and fifth at Hattah. What are your thoughts on those two events?

Finke for me is just scary. I love racing dirtbikes no matter what it is, but while I'm out there it's like I'm scared and I'm just focusing on gaining my confidence and getting up to the speed and attack and [to] be aggressive like some of those guys can do out in the desert. I'm going as fast as I can but at the same time trying not to risk anything. As for Hattah, this year was the first year I've ever raced that event and I'd say hands down that's the best race I've ever done in my life.

I personally thought you'd enjoy Hattah and it would suit your style. Do you think the fact that the track is more motocross style than flat-out desert race suited you?

It seems like it's a bit of a motocross race, but at the same time there is no motocross race that goes for four hours. In motocross your intensity is so high from the moment the gate drops and it's maximum intensity for 30 minutes. Even though the Hattah track is more motocross style with a bit more high speed, you still don't have that intensity because you always have in the back of your mind that the race lasts for four hours, which is a long time on a dirtbike.

Obviously we are pretty fit and it's what we do for a job fulltime. We work our butts off to be able to race for that long but you definitely feel it for a few days after these longer events. We're riding the full four hours as hard as we can. Your muscles get a big build-up of lactic acid in those events and it burns and you're sore for days after.

Tye Simmonds also made the move into the AORC ranks this year with quite a bit of hype. Do you think having Tye move across took any pressure or focus off you heading into this season?

It's something that I never really thought about, to be honest. With Tye coming over to the off-roads, I knew he was going to be a title threat because his talent on a bike is unbelievable. As everyone in the industry knows,

he's one of the best riders this country has seen. I never really thought about it in terms of taking any pressure off me. I'm not the type of rider that feels the pressure other people might place on me; it's more just the pressure I put on myself to try and win and it doesn't matter who else is there, for me I work my butt off to try and win. I put pressure on myself to do that no matter who is there.

Any chance we will see you at SX later this year?

It's hard to say at the moment — I don't think so. I want to focus on being ready for next year's off-road events and I have some goals I'd like to achieve there, but it's in the back of my mind for the future, for sure.

When I called this evening you mentioned that you'd been out riding with your daughter. It's probably something most people don't know about you — not only are you one of the fastest riders in the country; you're also a proud dad. How is life as a father?

As I was saying before, it's unreal to win a championship, but to see a smile on my daughter's face is even better. As you know yourself, it's the best feeling



ABOVE: You can be sure Ralston will put in the off-season work for a big 2016 charge

TOP LEFT: You'd find it hard to meet a nicer bloke than Beau and as he progresses he'll win plenty of fans

in the world being a dad and being able to give your kid what they want and what they need — it's a great feeling. She's already learning to ride and is picking it up quick. It's a good thing that she'll be able to ride a bike but a scary thing at the same time.

One final question I've always wanted to ask you: how much do your helmet sponsors hate you? Since I've known you I think half the photos I have of you are racing with a peak either hanging half off, smashed to pieces or completely missing. Can we start calling you the Cannonball Kid?

I actually do it on purpose — that way there's less wind catching under the helmet. [laughs] I really don't know, I guess sometimes, this year in particular, there's been a few races where I've been struggling a little bit and I try to get my shit together and try to ride above what I should be on the day and it doesn't turn out that great sometimes. I have ended up on my head a few more times than I would like. As the guys on my team know, I have a pretty big head. I run a XL helmet, so I guess when that's the heaviest part of my body it seems to hit the ground first! [laughs] **CAV**



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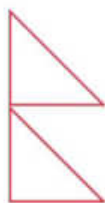
STORY AARYN MINERDS PHOTOS DAMIEN ASHENHURST & MATT BERNARD

The 2015 MX Nationals are over with three new national champions crowned at Coolool on Sunday, August 30. In the MX1 class, South Australian Kirk Gibbs powered his KTM Australia 450 SXF to glory ahead of the Victorian duo of CDR Yamaha's Kade Mosig and Monster Energy Kawasaki's Adam Monea.

Jay Wilson had a breakout season in the MX2 class to take his privateer JCR-backed YZ250F to the top step of the podium, edging out 2014 champion and last year's Serco Yamaha teammate Luke Clout for the title. Japanese veteran Takeshi Katsuya finished third, giving every 30-plus-year-old hope that they still have a chance of making it at the national level.

In the MXD class, GYTR Yamaha's Wilson Todd held off a couple of feisty West Aussies to take the title, leading home Jayden Rykers and Connor Tierney.

With the 2015 season complete, we reflect on some of the outstanding riders of what turned out to be a great season of racing across all three classes, with some big highs and the lowest of lows along the way.







## CONNOR TIERNEY

With two early-season round wins to his name, Tierney looked as though he could be the rider to win the MXD title at the midpoint of 2015. The second half of the season proved a little tougher for the West Aussie, though he was able to hold on to third position in the championship at season's end. Between him and Rykers, it looks like WA moto fans have a lot to cheer for in the coming years.



## LUKE CLOUT

It could so easily have been back-to-back MX2 titles for Luke Clout and things were looking good all year.

The Serco Yamaha rider had his share of adversity during the year with a thumb injury nearly derailing his season, but the biggest deciding factor in this year's title chase came down to the penultimate round at Toowoomba when he dropped a lot of points to Wilson.

Clout is a champion and will be a contender wherever he ends up in 2016, be it MX1 or MX2 here in Australia or overseas.



## KIRK GIBBS

This championship has been a long time coming for the man from Mount Gambier in South Australia. A picture of consistency through the first half of 2015, by midyear the KTM Australia factory rider held a big points lead, which he then controlled through the second half of the season as he fought firstly through a shoulder injury and then a back injury that minimised his ride time between rounds during the final weeks of the season.

To seal the 2015 MX1 title at the same venue where he suffered a life-threatening horror crash in 2012 was a fitting way for the hard-working racer with a never-give-up attitude to take the crown.

The likeable Gibbs was a popular winner with fans and fellow racers alike and there's no doubt he'll be back to defend his title with the same team in 2016.

IT ISN'T OFTEN  
YOU SEE ANYONE  
CHASE DOWN  
AND CATCH BEN  
TOWNLEY BUT  
THAT'S EXACTLY  
WHAT MONEA  
DID ON HIS WAY  
TO WINNING  
THE SEASON-  
ENDING RACE

## JAY WILSON

Quietly spoken and happy to let his actions speak louder than words, the MX2 champ fought through some major struggles in 2015 on his way to his championship win.

It's crazy to think Jay nearly missed round two of the championship through wanting to be by his brother's side after Dylan Wilson suffered a serious crash at the opening round in Horsham that left him in a coma.

A last-minute decision to ride bagged Wilson a big points haul at round two and he finished the day tied at the top with Luke Clout but missed out on the round win on count-back.

It's also hard to believe that Wilson's first round win didn't come until round nine, but he made up for it by winning the title in grand style with a perfect 1-1 result at the final round in Coolumb the following weekend to put the result beyond any doubt.



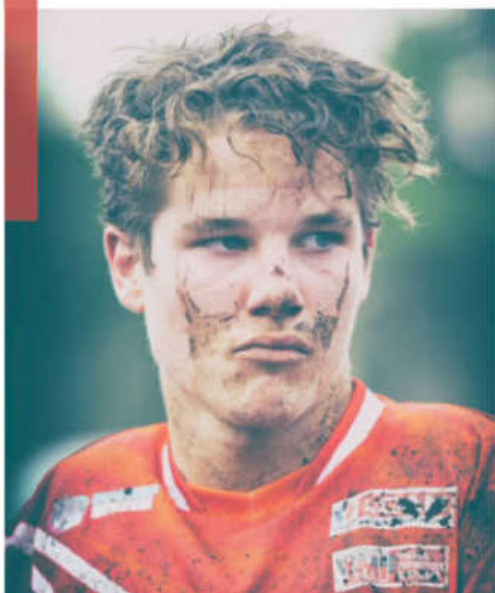




## BEN TOWNLEY

Retired? Part-time rider? Sure, but this man is still and will always be a beast on a bike. His rides in both motos at the final round in Coolumb were inspired. He stalked Luke Styke for the opening moto win before holding off all but a fast-charging Adam Monea in race two, picked up the final round win and gave his Honda team something to smile about.

And if you ever wondered if the 30-year-old is past his prime, check out this year's MXoN where he once again proved he's world class, finishing second only to current world MXGP champ Romain Febvre.



## WILSON TODD

The MXD title was considered all but over even before the first gate dropped on the 2015 season, with many expecting second-year rider Wilson Todd to walk away with the series from the outset. However, a big pre-season accident while training off the bike (well, dirtbike!) left the GYTR Yamaha rider lucky to be alive, let alone able to line up for round one.

While Wilson did not dominate the entire year, he did show he was the class of the field by year's end to take hold of the MXD Championship cup.



## TAKESHI KATSUYA

For a rider who could've lined up in the Vets class, Takeshi Katsuya put a lot of young riders to shame this year. The man on the apparently stock Kawasaki KX250F was the sensation of the class, holding down plenty of podium results throughout the year and managing to land on the podium in at least one moto at each of the opening five rounds of the season.

He picked up his first moto win at Shepparton and followed with a second moto win at Toowoomba but in both cases was edged out of the overall round win by the narrowest of margins.

Finishing third in the championship standings at year's end was a great achievement. And, while his KX250F may have appeared stock, the Factory Kawasaki Japanese test rider had a lot of unobtainium hidden within those ordinary-looking cases!

**BETWEEN TIERNEY AND  
RYKERS, IT LOOKS LIKE  
WA MOTO FANS HAVE  
A LOT TO CHEER FOR  
IN THE COMING YEARS**



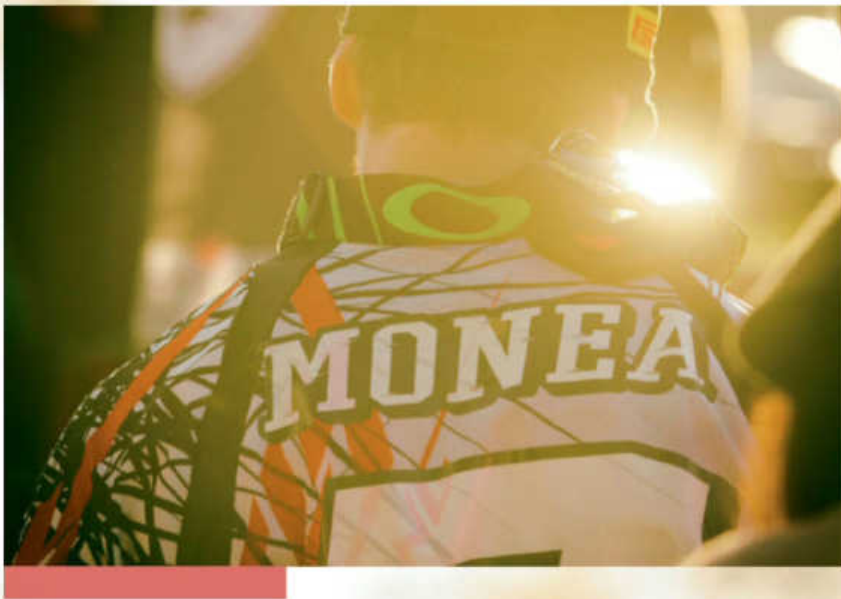


## ADAM

Monea got off to a somewhat slow start to the season at the opening two rounds, posting 6-8 overall round results. He pulled it all together at round three to step onto the podium for the first time for 2015 and would do likewise at another four rounds during the season, giving the Victorian a 50 per cent podium strike rate for the year.

The season finale at Coolum was a massive highlight of his season. After he put in a massive charge from dead last in race one, his ride in the final race of the year could go down as the best ride by any single rider of 2015. It isn't often you see anyone chase down and catch Ben Townley – but that's exactly what Monea did on his way to winning the season-ending race.

All in all, it was a very solid year for the NPS/Monster Energy Kawasaki rider and his final moto win of the year was enough for him to pip Luke Styke for the final championship podium spot.



## MATT

I don't think anyone could have scripted the MX Nationals season Matt Moss had in 2015. The two-time defending champion was the big favourite coming into Horsham at round one but, as we know, things started off badly and only continued to get worse for the Team Motul Suzuki rider. By the end of round two at Appin his title defence was over after a big first-turn crash sidelined him for the next two rounds.

As we also know, Mossy's return from injury lasted all but one round. Making it through Coolum, he returned from the midseason break at Shepparton only to be confronted by a piece of track machinery on the down side of the jump as he commenced his GoPro Superpole lap.

To top off a tough season, it was announced after the final round of the 2015 MX Nationals that the team with which Matt's had so much success will be closed down at year's end.

The big positive Moss can take away from the 2015 season is that he somehow survived jumping headfirst into a bobcat and will miraculously be healthy enough to line up and defend his SX1 championship.

## MOSS

## LUKE

Returning from racing the MX2 World Championship in 2014 with a team he failed to gel with, Styke quickly forged a strong bond with the Australian KTM team and kicked off his first season aboard a 450 with a pair of podium finishes before taking his first and only round win of 2015 at round three.

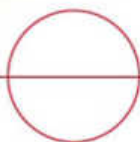
The remainder of the season was reasonably consistent for Styke and he looked as though he was going to give KTM a dream 1-2 championship result – right up until the final couple of rounds where he was outpointed by Mosig and Monea.

Always a determined rider who never fails to step up to a challenge, Styke, if history is anything to go by, will be a title contender in 2016.

## STYKE



IT'S CRAZY TO THINK JAY NEARLY MISSED ROUND TWO OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP TO BE BY HIS BROTHER'S SIDE AFTER DYLAN WILSON SUFFERED A SERIOUS CRASH AT THE OPENING ROUND IN HORSHAM THAT LEFT HIM IN A COMA







## DAN REARDON

The comeback kid. After a three-year hiatus from racing, Dan Reardon, at the age of 28, joined the CDR Yamaha team to contest this year's MX Nationals.

Reardon's most noticeable moments for the year were a podium at Murray Bridge and the round win at Nowra after early season dramas — through mechanical issues and a run-in with his teammate — put an early end to any thoughts of a championship-winning season in his first year back.

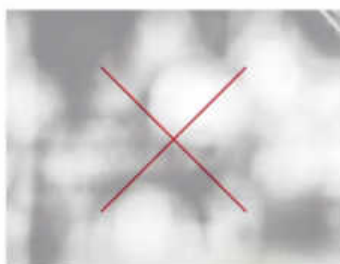
Watch out come supercross time, though. Reardon has always been known for his SX skills and will be a big favourite to win once the season kicks off at Bathurst.



## DYLAN LONG

After a few years dealing with injuries, the travelling privateer showed great speed along with a little inconsistency early in the year as a privateer with some backing from the Tattoo Racing team.

After being drafted into the Monster Energy Kawasaki team midseason for the injured Jake Moss, the man with the massive social media following did not disappoint, picking up his maiden MX1 moto win in the second moto at Nowra on his way to finishing second overall for the round.



**TO SEAL THE 2015 MX1 TITLE AT THE SAME VENUE WHERE HE SUFFERED A LIFE-THREATENING HORROR CRASH IN 2012 WAS A FITTING WAY FOR THE HARD-WORKING RACER WITH A NEVER-GIVE-UP ATTITUDE TO TAKE THE CROWN**



## JAYDEN RYKERS

Outshone — though only slightly — by fellow Western Australia-based rider Connor Tierney early in the season and finishing second to the Husqvarna rider at both rounds four and five, Rykers turned the tables in the second half of the season.

Picking up the overall round wins at rounds seven and eight in Shepparton and Nowra, Rykers proved that for a WA-based rider he has some serious hard-pack dirt-riding skills and by season's end edged out Tierney for the second spot on the MXD championship podium.

## KADE MOSIG

Aboard his CDR Yamaha, Mosig showed his true potential in 2015 by picking up three round wins to end the year in a tie with Gibbs for the highest number of MX1 round wins.

Looking back, the controversial coming together with teammate Dan Reardon at Horsham and dropping a lot of points after a crash at Raymond Terrace were the key factors in his being out of any real title hunt down the stretch. At year's end he overhauled Luke Styke and Adam Monea for second position and proved to be the rider to beat in the second half of the year.





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t h e  
m a c h

A full-page action shot of a motocross rider in a red suit and helmet, riding a green and white Kawasaki KX450F motorcycle. The rider is leaning forward, and a large cloud of dust is kicked up behind the bike, partially obscuring the background. The text "t h e" is at the top and "m a c h" is at the bottom, both in large, yellow, sans-serif font.





e a n

KAWASAKI LIFTS THE LID ON AN ALL-NEW  
KX450F AND WE BURN SOME FUEL ON ONE  
OF OUR FAVOURITE MOTOCROSS BIKES

STORY BY **SCOTT BISHOP** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MATT BERNARD**



i n e



Since the last major update for the 2012 season, the Kawasaki KX450F has been a favourite here at DIRT ACTION and always did well when it came to our annual shootout. It has traditionally combined a big, ballsy bottom and midrange motor with workmanlike handling and suspension that suits a wide variety of riders. As a result, the KX450F was extremely likeable.

From 2012, each model has been a refinement and a host of fine tuning has come its way in successive years. Some weight has been trimmed, some power added and there are upgrades to the suspension, including the introduction of the Separate Function Fork (SFF).

Like most of the major manufacturers, Kawasaki is on a four-year cycle when it comes to major updates to its motocross models and 2016 sees Kawasaki roll out what is essentially an all-new bike. What Kawasaki was able to achieve with the step up in performance from the 2011 to 2012 model was huge; as we rolled into our test venue, we were hoping for the same step forward to be taken again when we started spinning laps on the 2016 KX450F.



#### SECOND OPINION: SHANE BOOTH

I've always felt comfortable on the KX 450F and the same goes in 2016. It does feel quite a bit different from previous KX 450Fs. To me, the Kawasaki has always felt like a bigger bike but the 2016 is far from that. It's a much slimmer and more nimble-feeling bike; overall it feels quite a bit smaller than 2015. The power is now much smoother, too – it's a very easy 450 engine to ride with no aggressive hit, just a very linear delivery right from the time you open the throttle. There's more horsepower but it's spread so well throughout the power delivery that you could hardly tell. Some might think that's a bad thing but it's not; more power delivered smoother is a win. The bike turns quickly and has a light feel. Get your SFF air fork settings dialled and you have yourself a great bike.

## If you're a 2012–2015 Kawasaki rider/owner, you're in for a big change

#### WHAT'S NEW?

A hell of a lot. The design goal for this bike was pretty basic. The design team obviously sat around a corporate table and said, "Let's make the 450 lighter, faster and handle better." It's not rocket science but it's the obvious direction every manufacturer wants to take when designing its next generation of bikes.

To make it faster, Kawasaki has updated the cylinder head and offset it by an 8.5mm increase in efficiency. The intake valves and the intake cam timing have also been changed for 2016, not to mention a new piston. Also available is the KX FI Calibration Kit that can fine-tune the EFI settings on your machine. It's not dissimilar to the Power Tuner offered by Yamaha for its bikes.

To make it handle better the frame was redesigned, with rigidity in the right places a focal point. It's also 6mm narrower. That doesn't sound a lot but it's certainly noticeable. The radiators have also been rejigged to keep with the narrower feel. The swingarm has also been updated as have the suspension settings. And Kawasaki still offers the four-way-adjustable bar positions as well as the two-way-adjustable footpeg positions.

And to save weight, the entire bike got a going over. Kawasaki was able to shave 3.4kg in total with 2kg coming from the motor and another 1.4 coming off the chassis. And 3.4kg is a good chunk of weight to lose.





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## ON BOARD

If you're a 2012-2015 Kawasaki rider/owner, you're in for a big change. Leaping on board for the first time, the KX450F now has an ultra-modern feel with a flat seat and tank area and a slim feeling between the legs. As a result, the rider position feels far more aggressive and it's definitely a "sit-on" feel rather than the old "sit-in" layout of the older bikes.

On the same day we rode the 450F, Kawasaki also had the 250 on hand and the difference was significant from bike to bike, with the 450 much preferred. Gone is the dated feel of the old bike and the new 450 has a comfortable, in-command position that riders will enjoy.

The bike is noticeably slimmer, too. In 2012, Kawasaki lost 12mm of girth and has now shaved another 6mm,

### SFF BASIC SETUP

The beauty of this fork is that you can adjust almost everything externally with simple clicker adjustments or by adding or taking out air, but it can be almost too much for the average punter. Simply put, the inner chamber is like your spring rate. Stock is around the 145psi with most teams running around the 160-170 mark. The outer chamber is like a reserve and can assist in bottoming resistance. Many simply keep it at a steady rate all season and don't change it: 6-8psi is the common range.

If you think of the inner chamber as compression, then the balancer chamber is a rebound and usually set to a similar setting as the inner chamber. Speaking with several Kawasaki riders, a good starting point is

Inner: 160psi

Outer: 6psi

Balance: 170psi

Also, don't forget there are the usual clicker adjustments for compression and rebound, so don't ignore them – use them to fine-tune your settings.

so you can imagine just how much of a porker the 2011 bike would now feel against the 2016 machine, which is 18mm narrower.

The 'bars are Renthals and are a good bend for most people. Combine them with the four-way-adjustable mounts and everyone should be able to find a place where they feel comfortable. The adjustable footpegs are also a good idea, something that factory teams continually experiment with as you only touch the bike in four places and, if one of those is out, it's difficult to feel right at home.

The 270mm rotor is a nice touch and Kawasaki should be applauded for being the first to go to a 270mm disc. As a result, the front brake offers good performance and a strong feel at the lever. The clutch pull is a little heavy but not crazy and the look of the bike is modern yet typically Kawasaki.

### MOTOR

There are two major facets to producing a good motor: how much power is available and how is that power delivered?

To make a great motor, you can't simply have one or the other; you must have both and that's even more important in the 450cc class, as often a large amount of power is produced. But if it's unleashed in an unrideable fashion, there are issues.

For 2016, Kawasaki has gone for more power but tried to spread it out across a broader range and deliver it in a more linear fashion. It's a ploy that both KTM and Yamaha have used on their 2016 450cc models. There's

no doubt that Kawasaki has upped the HP in 2016. The motor always had a strong bottom and mid – never class-leading but more than enough. This year, there's more power on tap but it has a smoother, roll-on feel rather than a rush of blood and an explosion. It tractors along with plenty of torque and in a measured manner.

Midrange and top end also feel improved. If there was a weakness to the previous Kawie power plant, it was that it signed off in the high rpm. That isn't the case in 2016 as the motor continues to toil away across a wide rev range.

While the power of the motor is impressive, it's the way it's delivered that makes it good. It's a rider's motor that suits a motocross track, not a drag strip. It might punch out 56-57hp at the rear wheel but its solid, roll-on surge of power means it's easy to use and not overly aggressive or intimidating. It will still set you back in your seat but it's a good, manageable package.

Having already ridden the 2016 KTM and YZ-F, the Kawie 450 is right there with what most believe are the class leaders in the 450 fleet.

### SUSPENSION & HANDLING

The lighter weight, combined with the slimmer feel, means the general handling of the bike is already a step forward over the previous model. As mentioned, 3.4kg is a good weight loss and is evident on the track in braking at cornering.

I've always found the frame a good compromise in many ways. The Yamaha has a rigid feel when new and the Honda has forgiving, rubbery feel, while the

**It drives, tracks and  
behaves predictably with  
no unsettling features**







Kawasaki has always been somewhere in the middle. It doesn't have the new bike stiffness but has enough rigidity to be ridden at speed without too much fear.

That compromise is similar in the turning prowess of the bike. It's not razor sharp but it does fold into corners with little fuss and, with the added lightness, does feel more flickable than in the past. Straight-line stability still feels solid and as a whole it does a lot of things right – and not much wrong.

The fork has been an issue that divided many, not just for Kawasaki but as an industry. We have the air fork (and its varieties) versus the spring fork and, depending on who you talk to, the answers can vary a lot.

The Kawasaki runs the SFF air fork, with damping or valving on the left fork while the right houses three air chambers and a pneumatic spring – hence the air fork. The same basic fork is also shared with the RMZ450 although they're set up completely differently.

The Kawie version gives a plush feel at the top of the stroke that works well on braking bumps and helps the bike settle well into turns. Once in motion, it does use a bit of travel but the action is smooth and the resistance to bottoming is reasonable. Pro riders will want to beef up the action – not so much the initial part of the stroke but certainly mid and full stroke. Overall, it's a good setup and the air fork continues to improve each year.

The shock is solid. Set a ride height at the 103-105mm mark to get the balance of the bike, dial in some clickers to your liking and you should be good to go. It drives, tracks and behaves predictably with no unsettling features.

### FINAL WORD

Even if Kawasaki didn't improve the motor or fine-tune the suspension, the 2016 KX450F would have been a better bike regardless just based on the weight loss and the slimmer, more cutting-edge feel of the bike.

Rider comfort is an important element to a bike as one or two horsepower isn't going to sway a prospective buyer either way. The new KXF felt a lot more agreeable to me the moment I sat on it and that first impression always lasts.

Thankfully, the motor is better, as are the suspension and general handling of the bike, so the improvement goes right across the board. The beauty of the KXF is that it will help you go faster – you just won't feel like you are. **DAI**





# HIGH ROLLER

**THE R1200GS ADVENTURE  
IS BETTER THAN EVER AND  
SAFE ON ITS THRONE FOR  
YET ANOTHER YEAR**

STORY & PHOTOS DAMIEN ASHENHURST









**Y**ou can judge a motorcycle in a thousand different ways. You might be turned off by the shape of the plastics or, conversely, the sound of the exhaust might make you drool. I know a bloke who'll never ride a Kawasaki because he hates the colour green.

There are some bikes that make you want to ride. And I mean they call from the garage or shed in some sort of subliminal metal-to-human telepathy urging you to find a reason to leave the house and go for a ride.

I've felt that strongly with a few bikes. I'd push my first bike, a YZ80, to the top of our steep driveway and just roll it down with the engine off after dark so the neighbours wouldn't complain. I did that every day over and over without fail just to have been on my bike in some way.

I get a very similar feeling from BMW's R1200GS Adventure (won't be pushing it to the top of a steep driveway, though). When we have an R1200GS test bike here I just want to ride it all day, every day. It makes me want to do that in a way most other bikes don't.

### CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE

BMW has put a lot of development into both the R1200GS and the corresponding Adventure model, with 2013 heralding a raft of major changes that bolstered the marque's standing in what had become a very competitive marketplace.

The bike is intimidating to the uninitiated — there can be no denying that and I imagine it's what fuels a great deal of any scepticism about its abilities. I've ridden the bike through plenty of model iterations and still a part of me marvels at the size of the GS and wonders how I'll make it all work.

But there's sorcery afoot. You know that myth (and, yes, it is a myth) that a bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly because it's not aerodynamic and too heavy for its small wings? There's a parallel here but the GS erases any doubts you may have within the first few kilometres.

The fact is this is a beautifully balanced bike. Even with a full 30-litre fuel tank, once the GS Adventure starts to roll, the experience gets real and a whole world opens up. The instrument cluster tells you that there's a near to 600km range to play with, so point the bike at a mountain and go.

“

**THEY CALL FROM THE GARAGE OR SHED IN SOME SORT OF SUBLIMINAL METAL-TO-HUMAN TELEPATHY, URGING YOU TO FIND A REASON TO LEAVE THE HOUSE**

### BUTTON PUSHER

You can tell the BMW what you're doing and it will make the ride better and easier. For example, on the road stretches I left the bike in Road mode, which gave me full ABS, traction control and a linear “throttle pull” feel (the throttle is in fact electronic).

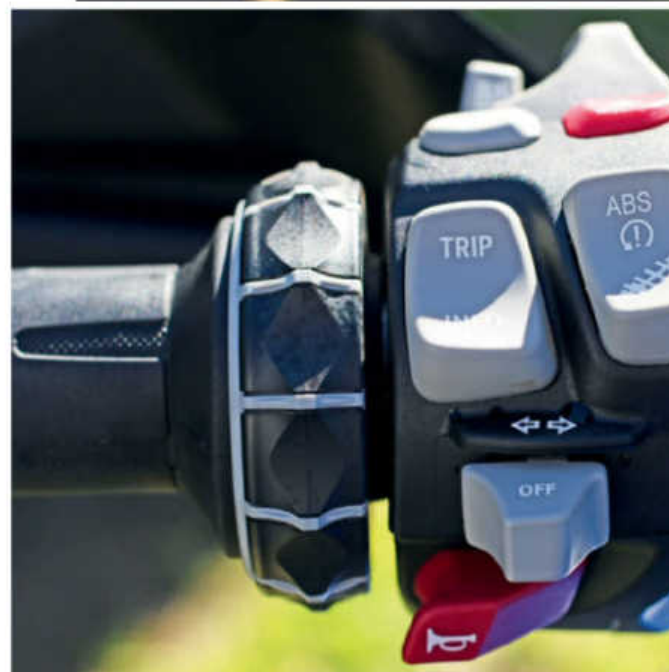
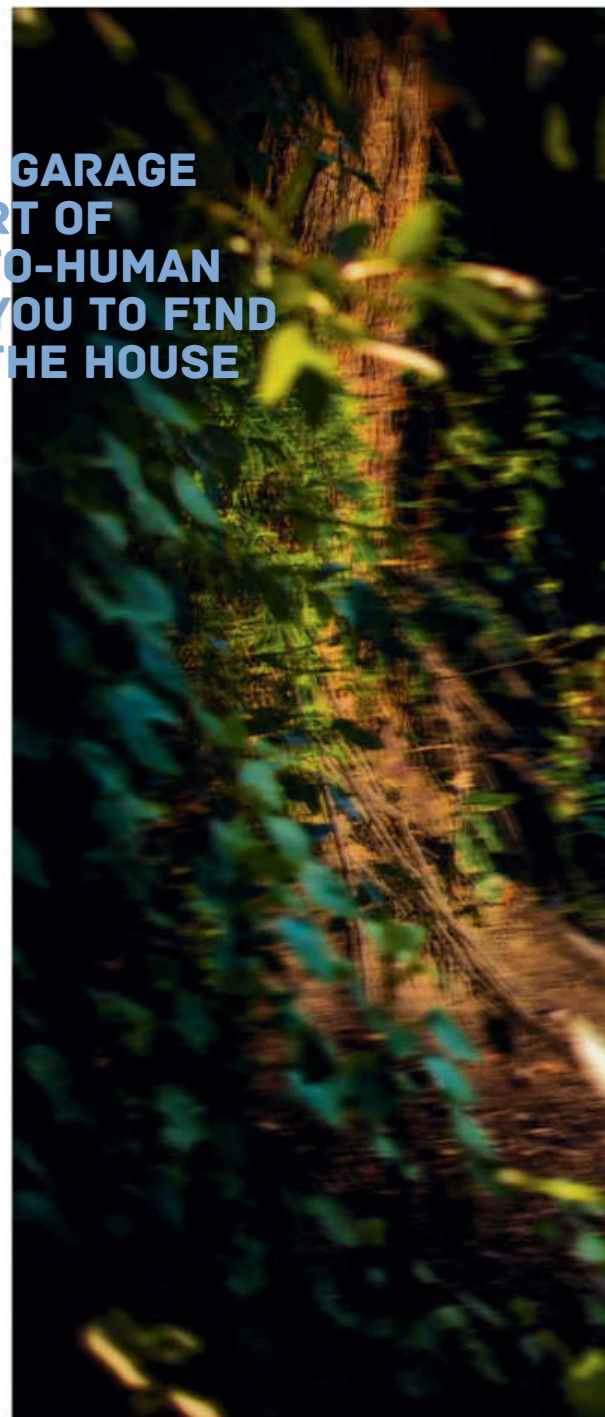
If you want to spin your beanie a heap more, flick it onto Dynamic mode and the engine becomes more responsive and aggressive. I actually left it in Standard mode on the road because there's almost nothing that can make me interested in riding on the road and my head was already in the mountains I was heading towards.

That said, it's a very comfortable bike with excellent ergos. That's fairly subjective but I found it to be the case with the F800GS Adventure also, so long road sections aren't painful at all.

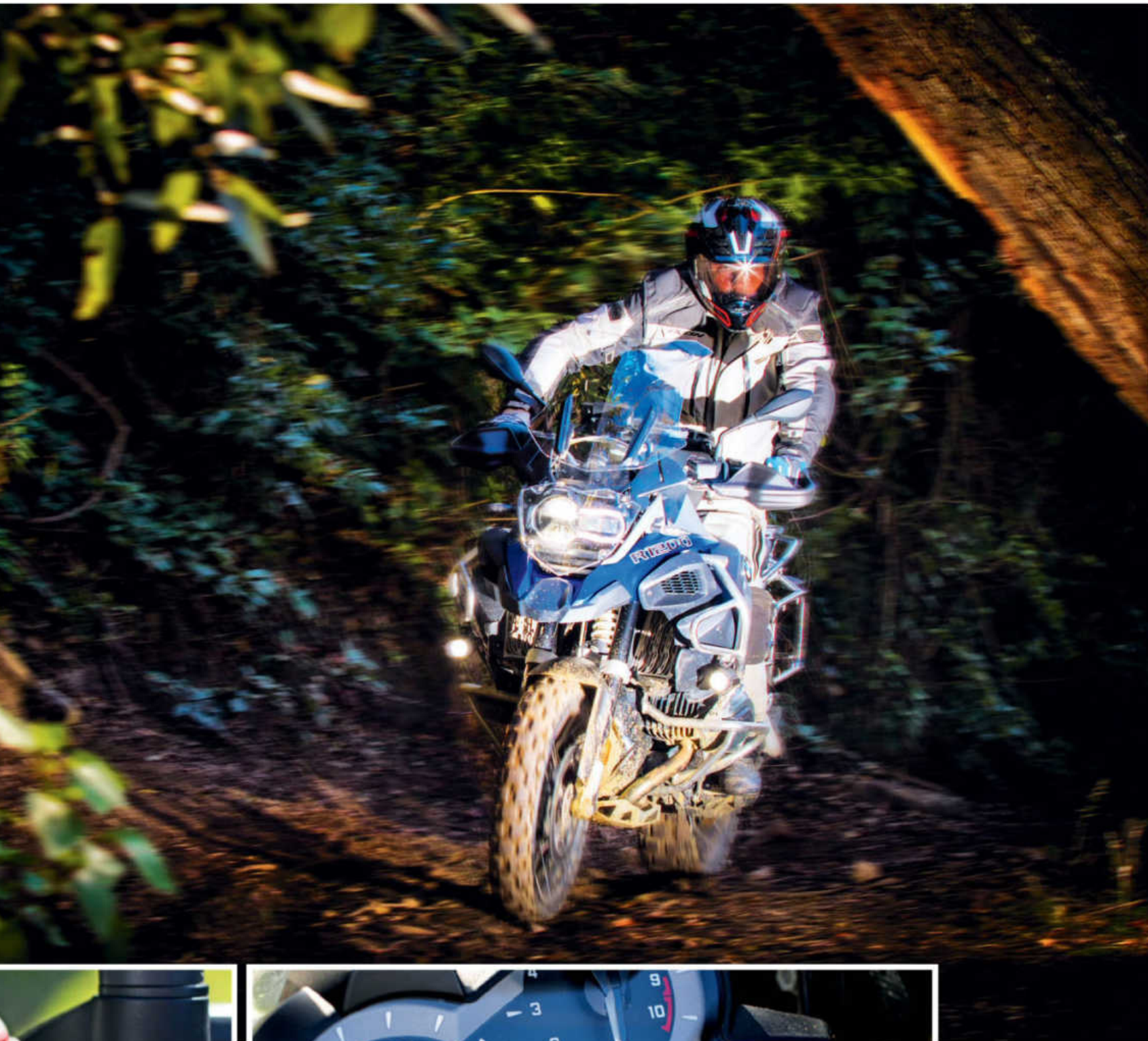
I flicked through the ESA (electronic suspension adjustment) modes until it recognised I had luggage in the form of my camera gear and once I reached the dirt I switched to Enduro mode. So it sounds like I was flicking switches like a furious game of *Street Fighter* but it took less time to dial the right settings in than it took to write about it here.

And it all works. The bike performs better in the appropriate mode and it's better to ride when you tell the suspension what you're doing. This stuff could be, but absolutely is not, a gimmick or waste of time. It works to make your ride as good as it can be and, while there was a time when I'd rail against riding a bike with more electronics than my washing machine, I embraced it and used it to the full in the case of the R1200GS Adventure.

The same goes for the ABS (best I've ever used) and the traction control. These things have come so far in the last few years and they are — in the case of the BMW, anyway — viable and valuable tools.







**ABOVE:** Thanks in part to a brilliantly stable front end, the BMW is easy to ride in the bush

**FAR LEFT:** All the information you could possibly need is displayed on the generous GPS screen

**BOTTOM MIDDLE:** This isn't as hard to use as it may seem at first glance. The click wheel to control the GPS is a brilliant idea

**LEFT:** I'm not a massive fan of the analogue speedo but the rest of the display is well sorted to handle all the info it conveys



“

SO IT SOUNDS LIKE I WAS FLICKING SWITCHES LIKE A FURIOUS GAME OF STREET FIGHTER BUT IT TOOK LESS TIME TO DIAL THE RIGHT SETTINGS IN THAN IT TOOK TO WRITE ABOUT IT HERE



**ABOVE:** The trail conditions have to get pretty bad to stop the R1200GS in its tracks, so you can explore hard and long

**LEFT:** The moniker that's launched a thousand epic adventures



## TRAIL HUNTING

I believe it was Shakespeare who said, “The buttons on the ‘bar doth not maketh the ride.” How right he was. The true greatness of the GS doesn’t come from the bits your fingers can play with; it comes from its incredible balance, the versatility of the engine and suspension and its confidence-inspiring handling characteristics. And I’m talking about off-road here, where some of you might be having trouble actually seeing it excel.

The front end is where the greatness begins and the word planted doesn’t do it justice. Its surefootedness coupled with the ability to ride the engine with just a bee’s dick of revs as you pick through a rock-infested hill section is the bike’s magic.

Gear selection isn’t absolutely critical because the mountain of torque almost always allows a range of three gears to choose from. Crossing ruts is no drama, wet clay is no greater hassle than normal and basically you’re limited by ground clearance and the time you need to get home by.

Tackle the off-road stuff standing up as you would on any other dirtbike and you can ride quite aggressively while keeping in mind that it’s a heavy

machine and as such doesn’t like to be smashed hard into large obstacles. Ride smart and you’ll conquer more than you could imagine.

Neither is it a bike for dropping your feet and waddling a great deal because the Boxer engine will hammer your shins like an under-8s soccer player.

That amazing balance I mentioned helps negate these issues because, unless you aim it at something that will obviously become a problem and thus would be best avoided, the bike just doesn’t sway or buck much at all. It’s incredibly stable through some of the gnarliest terrain and I found it rare that I ever put my feet on the ground for stability.

The gearbox on previous models used to knock like an ISIS search party. You knew you’d found the gear because it sounded like a brick had been dropped in the bottom of a nearby well. No more. The gearbox is smooth and in fact our test model also had the Gear Shift Assist Pro (GSAP) fitted which allows for clutchless shifting both up and down. This was something I found useful on and off road and once I convinced my brain that everything would be fine I used it constantly.

The same goes for cruise control. It took a bit for my mind to wrap itself around the concept of loosening my throttle hand on a freeway but, man, it’s a very,

very cool idea for those long, arm-burning stretches. I went for a good ride without any camera gear just to take in and enjoy the ride. At this point I flicked it onto Enduro Pro mode, which gives a more dynamic throttle response as well as disengaging the ABS at the back wheel but retaining it at the front. The suspension heads towards a harder setup and the type of riding you can do gets more aggressive.

This is stupid fun and, really, the only thing that stopped me in my tracks was that I was exploring pretty tough trails and if there was a doubt I could turn the bike around if the trail got ridiculous then I’d find another route.

## BANK ON IT

I could write a lot more about the R1200GS Adventure. It truly is one of the great bikes and one of my personal top five. The list of options literally couldn’t fit in this feature, so head to [bmw-motorrad.com](http://bmw-motorrad.com) and check that out because you can own this bike in so many configurations you may never see one just like yours.

Given the amount of accessories and the fact that few ever leave a showroom without add-ons, the price of a GS Adventure is indeed quite fluid but fit yourself out for around \$27,000 and you’ll be set to explore far and wide in comfort. That’s not a great deal more than much of the competition these days, with KTM about the same and the Super Ténéré not far off either.

In my world — given that’s close to half the price of a Ford Ranger XLT 3.2-litre TDCi but would mean way more to me in my shed, give me experiences a ute never could and maybe even last a lot longer — I’ll take that any day.

The king lives on. **DA**



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# BIG YELLOW BOWS OUT

RACING SUFFERS ANOTHER HUGE BLOW AS SUZUKI AUSTRALIA DECIDES TO FOLD ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TEAMS OF THE MODERN ERA

STORY SCOTT BISHOP PHOTOS DAMIEN ASHENHURST











After nearly 20 years in the business, Team Motul Suzuki will close its doors at the end of the 2015 season. Rumours had been swirling around the motocross pits for some time about some teams closing down and others downsizing, but when the official statement from Suzuki went out on September 25 it was a huge body blow to racing in Australia.

Regardless of whom you're aligned with, this is bad news. It takes away another two factory-supported rides, it costs five people their jobs and for team manager Jay Foreman it's 20 years of work written off with the stroke of a pen. There are no winners and we hope Suzuki can find a way to get back in action and roll out a professional team in the coming years. Suzuki Australia has said it will redirect its funds into supporting more riders on the RMZ range via other avenues.

#### HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

Since the GFC in 2009, it's been a tough time for the manufacturers. Bike sales have slowed but worse still are margins and profitability.

Selling motocross bikes is a cutthroat business — it's an ultra-competitive market. Recently in Brisbane, Suzuki was advertising a brand-new RMZ250 with a pit tent for \$7000. Honda joined in and offered its 2015 CRF250 for \$7250. At those prices, no one's making money.

But, to get to that point, sales of the RMZ have slowed considerably in recent times and as a result huge discounts have been applied to try to clear old or dated stock. From the outside, it appears Suzuki was in a situation with some models where it couldn't afford to keep them, but selling them so cheap meant the company was also taking a hit.

## SUZUKI AUSTRALIA HAS SAID IT WILL REDIRECT FUNDS INTO SUPPORTING MORE RIDERS ON THE RMZ RANGE VIA OTHER AVENUES





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So, as Suzuki's market share decreased, so did the available riders. Just two years ago, Suzuki shut down its road-race team to save some money and at the same time reduced money to its motocross team. Staff numbers had been reduced in recent times and by 2015 only two fulltime staff were on the team's books: Jay and his son Jesse, the mechanic for Matt Moss. They have people assist on weekends but it was a skeleton staff for a full factory outfit.

What kept the Suzuki motocross team alive could have been that big red number-one plate on the front of its bike. As Matt Moss had dominated the motocross and supercross scene in Australia, Suzuki could possibly justify its spend in racing in tough financial times. But when Matt decided to look elsewhere, the decision

to shut the team down started to take shape and ultimately occurred.

Sure, this will save some money but will it really help the brand in the long run? If you're an aspiring racer — road, off-road or motocross — why would you buy a Suzuki? Even if you win, there's no major support for you in the same way other brands are currently offering. It's tough times out there and tough decisions are being made. I think everyone hopes this is just short-term and Suzuki is back in the near future.

#### WIN ON SUNDAY?

The budget of a race team isn't directly related to the sales of the bikes they race but there is a connection that marketing gurus like to point out. It wasn't just

the RMZ's market share that stopped the race team; the sales numbers as a whole were the major stumbling block.

Still, a couple of things are worth discussing here. Does racing sell bikes and does the quality of the race bike have any bearing on the final decision of a potential buyer?

Let's start with the first one. The connection between racing and sales is a tough one as the "win on Sunday, sell on Monday" mantra has been both proved and disproved over the years. The US likes to use Ricky Carmichael as an example that winning and sales are totally unrelated. Carmichael won on Kawasaki, Honda and Suzuki during his career but reports at the time showed no significant increase in sales of any of the

## BIKE SALES HAVE SLOWED SINCE THE GFC, BUT WORSE ARE MARGINS AND PROFITABILITY





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models he raced. The public knew the bike Ricky was riding wasn't anything like the bike they were buying.

But for every case like RC in the US, there's an opposite position. I can recall the impact Jono Porter had on Suzuki in his local town of Gladstone when he was at his most popular. If you went to Gladstone from 2000 to 2004, it was full of Suzukis. At a time when the brand wasn't dominant, Jono's influence around Gladstone was massive.

Also, since the GFC, the RMZ looks the same. As we touched on in our RMZ450 test, the bike may be more than capable but to the punter it still looks like the 2008 model. Sure, there's been plenty of changes and the bike is no doubt better than the '08 model but it offers no striking showroom appeal — and in an image-driven sport like motocross, if you can't make it, fake it.

## PROUD HISTORY

Starting in the mid-1990s, Team Suzuki began with Jay Foreman assisting Suzuki-sponsored riders before he moved to a more official role a year later. The team worked out of Jay's garage for some time and used a Transit-style van and trailer to move around the country.

As the good times of the 90s continued and sales grew each year, so did the funding and Foreman turned a small-budget operation into a formidable race team that would see some of the best riders in the country ply their trade.

Formed in 1997, the team of Cameron Taylor, Andrew McFarlane and John DiStefano kicked the Suzuki race team into life under the MSR/Silkolene/Suzuki banner.

Chad Reed put Team Suzuki Australia in the spotlight when he turned pro in 1998. After years of riding



Suzuki as a junior, he was rewarded with a ride for the Suzuki factory team and instantly put the RM250 in the winners' circle.

From there, riders like Danny Ham, Daryl Hurley, Paul Broomfield, Cameron Taylor, Jono Porter, Matt Moss, Cody Cooper, Luke Burkhart and Lawson Bopping all passed through the team and all experienced some success, with Matt a multi-time Australian champion, Hurley a past winner of the MX Nationals and Taylor a perennial frontrunner.

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

As mentioned, Suzuki Australia has said it will redirect some money into other forms of marketing with the RMZs. That means it may look at more discounting, introduce a dealer-based race plan for more riders or it might be something entirely different.

But the bottom line is Suzuki needs to find a way to get more RMZs out into the real world. The more bikes that are out there and being ridden, the more riders are back in the shops and spending money on parts. **DA**

## WHAT THEY SAID

Responses from around the country and the globe

### CHAD REED, DIRTBIKE SUPERSTAR:

"Sad to see Suzuki Australia shutting down their race team. I was a Suzuki junior and won my first pro championship with them."

### GLENN MACDONALD, FORMER KTM JUNIOR MANAGER & WORLD JUNIOR TEAM MANAGER:

"I think it's really important for a manufacturer to have a factory presence at a national level. Jay Foreman has always been a respected and professional team manager who cared about the sport."

### CAMERON TAYLOR, FORMER TEAM SUZUKI RACER:

"I had the opportunity to ride for Suzuki twice during my career and both times it was a great experience. Jay did a great job as team manager and the bikes were always good. I was there when the team first started when we worked out of his HiAce; then when I returned it was much more professional with team mechanics, trucks and a proper manufacturer-supported race team."

### GAVIN EALES, SERCO/TEAM SUZUKI SPONSOR:

"I had a call from Suzuki the day prior to the release going out and it wasn't great news. Jay has run a great team and is a good friend so it's sad not just from a professional point of view but also a personal one. I think it's a big reality check for people out there who don't understand just how tough it is in the marketplace now and it's going to take some time before it gets better."





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# CHAMPION KILLER

WE RIDE A BIKE THAT DEFIED THE ODDS: JAY WILSON'S 2015 MX NATIONALS MX2 CHAMPIONSHIP-WINNING JCR YAMAHA YZ 250F

STORY SHANE BOOTH PHOTOGRAPHY GREG SMITH/IKAPTURE











**T**his bike is a little different from your average championship-winning machine. It isn't from a factory race team, which is more often than not the case for a bike like this. This bike is the result of a bunch of

motivated and passionate people who saw something in a young rider and pulled together to go racing for 2015.

It all came together relatively late but as it turns out it was well worth it. But don't be fooled — although these guys aren't parked under a huge truck and awning at the races, this isn't just a backyard effort. Those involved know very well where to focus effort to get the job done.

Former world number two and motocross legend Josh Coppins is the driving force behind the program, so rest assured there's plenty of experience to go around. These guys have managed to stay focused on the job at hand and not get caught up in the many distractions our sport can offer.

## THE PERSONAL STUFF

Jay has really found what he likes in a bike and this machine has quite a few little mods that get the bike feeling the way he wants it.

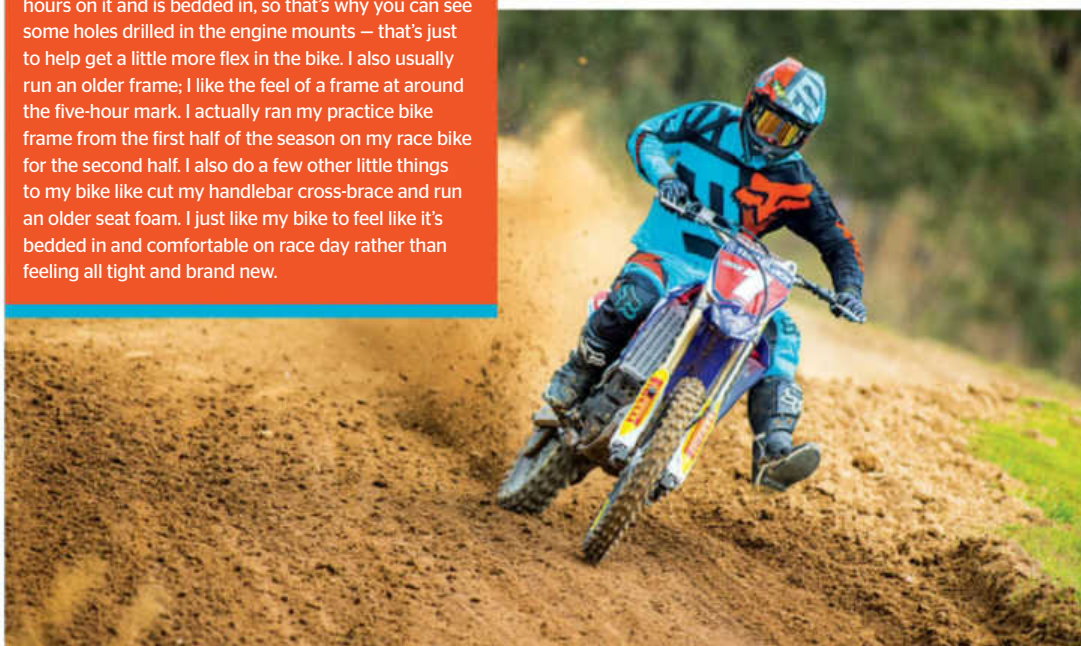
Starting with ergos, Jay runs a lowered subframe and a seat with a bump added to the foam. His Renthal 999 Twin Wall handlebars don't seem anything unusual but the team actually modified the cross-brace to allow more flex.

The frame is one from a previous practice bike, so it's bedded in and less harsh; along with that the team drilled out the engine mounts to allow additional flex. Jay also likes to use an older seat foam on his race bike so it gives a more comfortable feel.

One notable standard item is the triple clamps: unusual on a race bike of this level but Jay much prefers the feel of the standard clamps over any others and is able to get the handlebars in a comfortable position with the options available. If you were wondering, he runs the handlebar clamps in the forward position mounting holes with the offset clamps in the rear position.

## JAY WILSON'S TAKE ON HIS YZ 250F

The whole bike is unbelievable this year; the whole package is what makes it so good. The power curve is basically the same as stock but beefed up everywhere. The bike has so much torque I pretty much ride it in third gear and up everywhere. It's such a strong bike and I think I've proved it this year — I've pulled a lot of good starts and passed plenty of riders down straights. Wardy has done a great job with the suspension and Josh also put a lot of time into testing it at the start of the year. With everyone's input it's come together as such a strong package and it's definitely the best 250F I've ever ridden. I also like a bike that has some hours on it and is bedded in, so that's why you can see some holes drilled in the engine mounts — that's just to help get a little more flex in the bike. I also usually run an older frame; I like the feel of a frame at around the five-hour mark. I actually ran my practice bike frame from the first half of the season on my race bike for the second half. I also do a few other little things to my bike like cut my handlebar cross-brace and run an older seat foam. I just like my bike to feel like it's bedded in and comfortable on race day rather than feeling all tight and brand new.





"The bike has so much torque I pretty much ride it in third gear and up everywhere

### CHAMPIONSHIP-WINNING POWER

This 250F is a little different from MX2 race bikes I've ridden in the past. The engine is really based around a smoother, torque-based power delivery: a style of power that lends itself to being ridden in the meaty part of the rev range rather than high up on or near the limiter.

If you had the chance to see Jay in action at an MX Nationals this year you'd likely have noticed that he rides the bike very well in this range. Past MX2 race bikes that I have ridden have had a more top-end-based power, the type that requires high rpm to get the best from the engine, but this bike was different. Third gear was no problem for all but the tightest of turns and it was happy to be up-shifted well before the rev limiter was reached.

Don't take it the wrong way — it is a 250 and you do still need to keep the revs up, but not absolutely screaming and bouncing off the limiter all the time as you might think. This type of power delivery, paired with a rider who's adapted to riding the bike in a way that extracts the best from it, makes it an easier bike to race for 30 minutes plus two laps. It will be more likely to get the power to the ground. A bike that's being ridden in the meaty part of the power curve generally handles better than one that's about to bounce off the rev limiter, so there are many positives to this style of engine.

### THE HANDLING PACKAGE

With all the effort the team puts in to make the bike feel bedded in and comfortable, I must say I noticed it. Quite often when I jump on a race team bike for a test it takes quite a few laps to feel comfortable; they tend to feel very tight and stiff due to the fact they're like a brand-new







## JAY WILSON'S JCR YAMAHA YZ 250F

**Engine:** JCR Yamaha

**Ignition:** Vortex

**Ignition cover:** GYTR

**Throttle body:** R&D

**Clutch:** GYTR

**Clutch cover:** GYTR

**Exhaust:** GYTR

**Engine mounts:** JCR Yamaha modified

**Handlebars:** Renthal 999

**Grips:** Renthal soft full diamond

**Front brake rotor:** GYTR 270mm

**Rear brake rotor:** 2006 genuine Yamaha

**Skid plate:** GYTR

**Water pump guard:** GYTR

**Fuel pump guard:** JCR Yamaha

**Seat cover:** CFX

**Footpegs:** Standard sharpened

**Radiator shrouds:** Cycra

**Holeshot button:** GYTR

**Front tyre:** Pirelli MX 32

**Rear tyre:** Pirelli MX 32

**Rear tube:** Mousse

**Front tube:** Heavy duty

**Rear sprocket:** JT

**Chain:** RK 520 MXU

**Chain guide:** GYTR

I also usually run an older frame; I like the feel of a frame at around the five-hour mark

bike, but this one did feel different. From the softer, broken-in seat to the overall handling, it just felt ridden and that made me feel comfortable right away. There's a lot to be said for that feeling when it comes to race day. For a rider to get on their race bike and have it feel comfortable and not stiff compared to the practice bike they've been riding all week is a big advantage when they hit the track.

As far as the suspension goes, the bike handled big hits very well, as expected of a bike at this level. It remained very settled and drove well under power. I did notice the rear was set up to have a slightly dead feel, especially under brakes. I asked Jay about this and he confirmed that's a feel he likes; he prefers the rear to stay down and feel a little harsh in places rather than have a very active rear end. I like that feel, too, as it makes the bike feel more predictable and it also tends to settle quicker in the event of a big impact like an over-jump or drop off.

### THE WRAP


I'm glad I had the opportunity to ride this bike; it's been built with the weight of experience and with a different spin than many race bikes. It's not dripping with all sorts of anodised aftermarket bits just for the sake of it – it's a very impressive race bike built to give its rider the best chance of winning races. I'd say it worked out pretty well. 







IMAGE: FUELFOTOMEDIA

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# M I N I

STORY GREG SMITH  
PHOTOS SHANE BOOTH

SO MUCH FUN EVEN THAT OLD LADY NEXT DOOR WILL BE SETTING UP HER  
CAMP CHAIR AND CRACKING OPEN A BOTTLE OF SHERRY TO WATCH YOU





# MADNESS





**R**emember the days when you'd come home after school, grab the minibike and head out with your mates riding around for hours? Just the thought brings back great memories and plenty of smiles, right?

Now think about how much you learned practising turns, wheelies, jumps and so on. Well, the past has returned and I had a taste of it the other day onboard a couple of YCF minicross bikes.

The mini/fun bike category accounts for five of the top 10 best-selling motorcycles in Australia. Yes, you read it right. In 2014, 11,774 fun-category bikes were sold in Australia — so little bikes are big business.

The brand YCF was founded in France in 2004 by partners Yannick Coquard and Dimitri Bera who still run the business to this day. With the help of 65 employees, they continue to concentrate on build quality, design and reliability. In recent years the brand has spread into multiple foreign markets away from its French birthplace, resulting in more positivity worldwide for this small but conscientious brand. As a matter of fact, some of the world's best riders have a replica (stickered and colour-matched) YCF sitting in their garage.

The range is pretty easy to understand. They're all four-strokes (the number indicates the capacity) starting with the YCF 50 A, aimed at small kids —

training wheels and a remote kill switch setup are available.

Then there are the Start models F88S, F88SE, F125S, F125SE, F125 (S for semi-auto; E for electric start). Next up is the Pilot with the F88S, F125 and F150. At the top of the range sit the Factory SP1, SP2 and SP3, the latter in two versions: 150cc and 190cc. Each of the three models has its own frame design with a few extra details changing as well.

I'll delve slightly into the differences between them below but all of these bikes look extremely well built and ultra modern. It's best to check out YCF's website for bike-to-bike comparisons.

### KICK 'EM TO LIFE

On the day of the test I didn't get a chance to ride the 50 or 88cc versions and to be realistic they're not targeted at me or anyone reading this magazine but they look and feel just as robust as their larger siblings.

As I regularly ride a 450cc I thought I'd jump on the 150cc SP2 first and head out for a ride to see what the flagship range could do. To say I was impressed would be an understatement. The bike handled predictably even with the 14in/12in (front to rear) wheel combo; it also seemed to have more torque than I can remember ever in a pit bike. Weighing approximately 73kg with a ride position and seat height of 800mm that's realistic for adults, it felt agile yet stable on the track, so much





## TECH SPECS

### YCF START F125S

\$1890 ride away

**Engine:** Single-cylinder  
4-stroke air-cooled 125cc  
**Gearbox:** 4-speed (N-1234)  
with automatic clutch  
**Front suspension:** 660mm  
UPSD forks  
**Rear suspension:** 270mm  
adjustable shock  
**Front tyre:** 60/100/14  
**Rear tyre:** 80/100/12  
**Seat height:** 765mm

### YCF PILOT F150

\$2390 ride away

(TLD Limited Edition \$2590)  
**Engine:** Single-cylinder  
4-stroke air-cooled 150cc  
**Gearbox:** 4-speed (N-1234)  
with clutch  
**Front suspension:** 735mm  
UPSD forks  
**Rear suspension:** 310mm  
adjustable shock  
**Front tyre:** 60/100/14  
**Rear tyre:** 80/100/12  
**Seat height:** 790mm

### YCF SP2

\$3390 ride away

**Engine:** Single-cylinder  
4-stroke air-cooled 150cc  
**Gearbox:** 4-speed (N-1234)  
with clutch  
**Front suspension:** 735mm  
UPSD forks  
**Rear suspension:** 330mm  
adjustable shock  
**Front tyre:** 60/100/14  
**Rear tyre:** 80/100/12  
**Seat height:** 800mm



so it was confidence boosting. The real bonus for me was the clutch, allowing me to change the power delivery to alter the balance mid-turn or in flight, something other branded auto/semi auto bikes can't do. The brakes, both front and rear, felt progressive and positive. Suspension at either end never felt overwhelmed (when used appropriately), which is impressive considering I'm 82kg. It does offer compression adjustment on the shock and the upside-down forks.

The transmission is a four-speed (N1234) with neutral as the lowest position. The gearing felt bang-on for the track I was riding and there weren't any flat spots while shifting (mind you, I didn't see fourth too many times).

Other notable features are the factory-

looking airbox, Mikuni carburettor, billet anodised hubs and triple clamps plus the trick frame design and alloy swingarm.

On returning to the pits I couldn't stop looking at the TLD Lucas Oil Pilot F150 or, for that matter, the professional-looking setup YCF used to display its range and some additional products.

Next up was the Start F125S — I'm keeping that TLD bike till last. The Start F125S is aimed squarely at the novice/learner rider (unlike the SP2, which is for the more competent rider). It has a seat height of 765mm with an optional 720mm version that comes with a lower handlebar as well. This has the semi-automatic four-speed transmission (no clutch) and an adjustable throttle so you can regulate from 0-100 per cent throttle rotation, helping teach people to ride and gain confidence.

On the track, the bike feels slightly more nervous than the SP2 but you'd expect that given the difference between them. It also uses the 14in/12in (front to rear) wheel combo, which helps stability, plus the bike weighs in at a respectable 66kg.

The 125cc powerplant would be more than enough for most learners under 70kg but people over 80kg may appreciate the 150cc power plant once they get in the swing of things. Mind you, the riding position and the ergonomics were still great for me at 185cm. However, in the pictures I still look like I've stolen a kid's bike; on the SP2 it wasn't as noticeable.

After a few laps of Queensland Motorcycle Park's Mini Junior MX Track I started to feel a little more at home on the bike and, while the braking was great, I still felt the power and suspension were just a little too soft for me. Still, it was lots of fun.

## LOVIN' THE LUCAS

Back into the pits and it was time for a ride on the bright orange Lucas Oil Pilot F150. It looks like a bike that's going to be one hell of a ride.

Fortunately for my undies, it's just cosmetics — the standard 150cc power plant still resides in its near-Day Glo orange frame.

Yes, this is a limited-edition bike and included in the pretty generous \$200 price hike are the following: orange frame, orange plastics, frame graphics, N-style TLD team graphics, orange grips, orange bar pad, orange CNC triple clamps, orange fuel hoses, orange front disc guard and rear brake master cylinder guard.

So, we've established the bike looks the business but how does it feel and perform? Seat height is a user-friendly 790mm and it hits the scales at 69kg. Overall the feel of the bike is closer to the SP2 than the Start F125S. Being a 150cc, it has that extra torque when needed.


The gearbox was a manual four-speed version. The clutch was light and direct plus using it helped keep the bike stable

in those awkward situations mid-turn. The suspension is slightly shorter in the rear than the SP2 but the forks are the same, giving the bike an above-average feel on the track and the ability to adjust it. The ride position is extremely comfortable and the 14in/12in (F/R) wheel combo worked well, providing predictability. But the best part of this bike was how well balanced it seemed to be with the 150cc engine.

## CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

In summary, I'd say the Pilot F150 suited me best when taking the following three factors into consideration: look, ride and price. But if price wasn't a factor I'd take the SP3 190cc as I could see loads of fun times and madness to be had, especially if there's more than one of you.

That's the other consideration to remember: where to ride these bikes. They are pretty quiet and in standard trim I'm sure you'd get away with riding them on a private track without any noise dramas apart from the yelling and yahooping.

With a bunch of mates on them it would be so much fun and the best part is it'd be cheap fun. Replacement parts for the YCFs are extremely affordable and the large dealer network should also give after-sales peace of mind. I'm already thinking about play riding after work in the summer months — it's less than half the price of my mountain bike! 











## IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH IN THE AFTERMATH OF ONE OF THE MESSIEST SIX DAY ENDUROS EVER

STORY HAYDEN GREGORY  
PHOTOS MARK KARIYA



As many of you have now heard, the 2015 ISDE held in Kosice, Slovakia, was nothing short of controversial. As Australia prepared to lift its first senior World Trophy in 92 years, drama exploded, lawyers took the place of mechanics and the FIM became the main attraction. Riders were disqualified, protests were made, times were hidden and corruption bled. In an absolute mess, the FIM named France the 2015 World Trophy provisional winners.

Looking from the outside in, things did not seem right. How have these decisions been made and what was the reaction to the rulings? For a greater understanding on the matter I caught up with Active8 Yamalube Yamaha team manager and Australian team assistant manager AJ Roberts.

On making the call, it soon became evident that in short, Australia was well and truly ripped off.

To provide some context, the problems began on day three, which involved riding the course from days one and two in reverse with a few extra loops thrown in. At the beginning of the day, all riders were made aware of three checkpoints they must pass.

"They have three route checks a day, every day," Roberts stated. "Every morning they put a new route check card on their handlebars. When you pass a checkpoint they punch a hole through it."

Out of 500 competitors, eight riders missed one of these checkpoints and continued to ride. The list included three French riders — half their ISDE team. Marc Bourgeois (France), Anthony Boissière (France), Jeremy Joly (France), Taylor Robert (USA), Lorenzo Santolino (Spain), Cristóbal Guerrero (Spain), David Knight (Great Britain) and Manuel Monni (Italy) were all in the wrong, finishing the day with only two checkpoints marked on their card. Under normal FIM rules, missing a checkpoint means you're disqualified from the event as you did not complete the course correctly.



Dan Milner



Victorious Aussie Junior Team



Beau Ralston

AJ was as sure as anyone on this: "The rules are pretty clear — it's immediate exclusion. It doesn't have to go to jury to get excluded. You've missed the course; there is no argument. You've missed the route check, you're out. You have nothing to stand on."

The only way the riders could be exempt from disqualification was if a majority made the same mistake. For example, if 50 riders had missed the checkpoint, there might be an argument. However, there were only eight, a tiny percentage of total race goers,

when disqualified Australian riders Tye Simmonds, Beau Ralston and Lachy Stanford all went the right way alongside a host of others. They all saw the sign — so why should the other eight riders be given any leeway?

Following the events, a jury deliberated and found the eight riders to be in breach of the rule. The riders would be disqualified and Australia would be in the hot seat to take out its first ISDE World Trophy. At least that's what we thought.

This is when things got really messy ...

## THE PRESENCE OF LAWYERS AND THREATS OF A TRIP TO THE COURTS WERE ENOUGH FOR THE FIM TO CRUMBLE

### FIGHT THE POWER

The French team rallied and took every avenue they could to launch a protest. They forged a backing with the support of teams USA, Britain, Spain and Italy, who all paid €200 to protest the decision of the jury.

The FIM (which has French backing) dropped a bombshell, accepting the appeal and allowing the riders to continue in competition pending results. Riding under appeal, the French times were not shown for days four and five. Roberts described them as stealth



# RM-Z

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**SUZUKI**  
**FINANCE**





Tayla Jones



Tye Simmonds



Jess Gardiner

bombers: "You couldn't tell if they were doing any good or not. For two days we had no idea where France was."

Suddenly, the Australian team had a lead of 12 minutes over second-placed Italy due to the excluded riders' times not being shown. The guys were doing extremely well and found themselves in quite a comfortable position. As Roberts shares, the team essentially had the opportunity to ride with more caution; they didn't have a time to chase but rather a lead to protect. "Guys, just relax. We've got three more days; we want all the bikes to finish and we don't want injuries," AJ said.

Team Australia rider Glenn Kearney was also able to reflect post-race on this important moment. The Husqvarna enduro racing team manager recalled, "When the Yanks went out on day three and suddenly our lead jumped from seconds to minutes, the team backed it down a notch and played it safe. All we had to do was stay on and ride well and we'd get the job done."

"Milner kept on pushing because he had a shot at the outright, but you could see the other guys backed it down a little bit on each test."

At this stage the Australians were killing it. Daniel Milner, Josh Green and Daniel "Chucky" Sanders were

## AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE GUYS DID EVERYTHING THEY COULD DO TO WIN IT. THEY WERE RIPPED OFF



Glenn Kearney

## ALL NOT LOST

Regardless of the outcome of the French protest, the Australian team had massive wins that need to be celebrated loudly. Our women's team absolutely destroyed the competition yet again. They beat France by almost an hour and third-placed Sweden was over an hour back. Tayla Jones confirmed her place at the top as the fastest woman, leading home Jemma Wilson and Jessica Gardiner in an amazing finish that they should be stoked with and proud of.

The Junior Trophy team also finished as winners with a sweet 15 minutes back to Sweden. Daniel Sanders capped off a huge week by finishing atop the E3 class and all those boys will have the competition worried about who's coming through the system in years to come.

Dan Milner also deserves a mention because his ride in the Trophy Team was amazing. Milner finished second overall and showed that at speed he's more than a match for the world's best.

all top three in their respective classes. It was when the French governing body got involved that things got even messier.

The French compiled a letter within 12 hours of the jury decision stating that they were suing the FIM for not showing their times while under appeal. They had found a loophole and, as AJ proclaims, "The FIM shit themselves and put them back in the event." The presence of lawyers and threats of a trip to the courts were enough for the FIM to crumble.

As times were reinstated, the French were conveniently atop the World Trophy standings. All of a sudden Australia had everything to lose. The French had been riding in the dark for two days and the Australians had been taking precautions to keep on two wheels. The time difference was two minutes heading into the final time trial. The boys stepped up and did extremely well, wiping a whole minute off the lead time, but they still finished a minute behind.

### THE WIN NOBODY WON

At the conclusion of the event, Glenn Kearney shared his thoughts on the final outcome: "Apparently it's got to go to court and, the way I understand it, it's still provisional until the French get officially let back into the results."

"It's definitely disappointing and it leaves a bad taste in your mouth, that's for sure. I've been racing Six Days for the last 13 years now and I've been on the wrong side of the rulebook a couple of times and that's just part and parcel of enduro. I've been excluded before. To see it come down to that again and then the rulebook just get thrown out the window is disappointing."

"When France was excluded for missing a route check, we looked to our management — who do a great job — and they said, 'Yeah, they are definitely going to be out. There is no other rule, no time penalty can be given, it's exclusion only.' [Team manager] Don Atkins lives and dies by the letter of the law in that rulebook and for him to have it thrown in his face after decades



# FACTORY DRIVEN

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## TOP FIVE RESULTS

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1. France 21:08:30.76
2. Australia +1:00.38
3. Spain +10:26.76
4. Italy +13:34.41
5. Great Britain +22:43.38

### 2015 ISDE JUNIOR WORLD TROPHY STANDINGS (FINAL)

1. Australia 12:56:33.09
2. Sweden +15:26.84
3. Italy +26:44.08
4. France +27:51.32
5. Great Britain +30:00.63

### 2015 ISDE WOMEN'S WORLD TROPHY STANDINGS (FINAL)

1. Australia 10:15:02.65
2. France +55:53.73
3. Sweden +1:15:20.98
4. Finland +1:24:11.48
5. USA +1:26:35.15



Josh Green

of work behind the Australian Six-Day team is just gut-wrenching,” Kearney concluded.

These words echo the feelings of most enduro fans. Speaking from experience, Kearney knows how important rules are and the consequences of failing to meet them. They govern any sport from football to tennis and enduro racing is no different. The rule states three checkpoints must be passed and the disqualified riders simply did not follow them.

AJ furthered Kearney's comments to question the integrity of the FIM and their ability to stay firm on decisions: “The problem was the corruption behind the scenes; all of a sudden the jury doesn't mean anything any more. What does the jury mean if you can just get a lawyer involved and start suing the FIM on their decisions? Why would teams need a trainer or doctor? All they need are lawyers and barristers.”

### PODIUM PANDEMONIUM?

It's obvious here that the FIM is setting an extremely ugly precedent. The event is over 90 years old, the oldest of its kind, and never has it been acceptable to skip straight past a checkpoint.

The thing is, the French are complaining that the

penalties are too harsh. What could they possibly think is an appropriate penalty? Even so, they had three riders make the mistake. You can't tell me that three mistakes would not accrue more than a minute total penalty for a Six Days event – one minute being the end lead time that the French supposedly had over the Aussies.

Roberts was worried that this could change enduro competition forever. “Teams are going to become more calculating,” he said. “They are going to figure out what the penalty is worth to them in the long run.”

No longer will riding be the only focus of the event; strategy will take over.

The appeal is set to be decided within the next six weeks (possibly before this article goes to print.) By then, everyone will be over it. It may be enough time for the FIM to just sweep it all under the rug and leave France as 2015 victors. If justice does prevail and we are crowned champions, what does that achieve? The moment has been taken away from our boys and they are not there to receive recognition.

Prior to the presentation ceremony, AJ explained how he had a team meeting with the boys: “We had a team meeting, myself and the junior and senior teams. We had to come up with a strategy, a plan. Milner came up with a

brilliant idea. He said we should just stand on top of the podium anyway on the top step because they call second before first. We all agreed, let's do it.

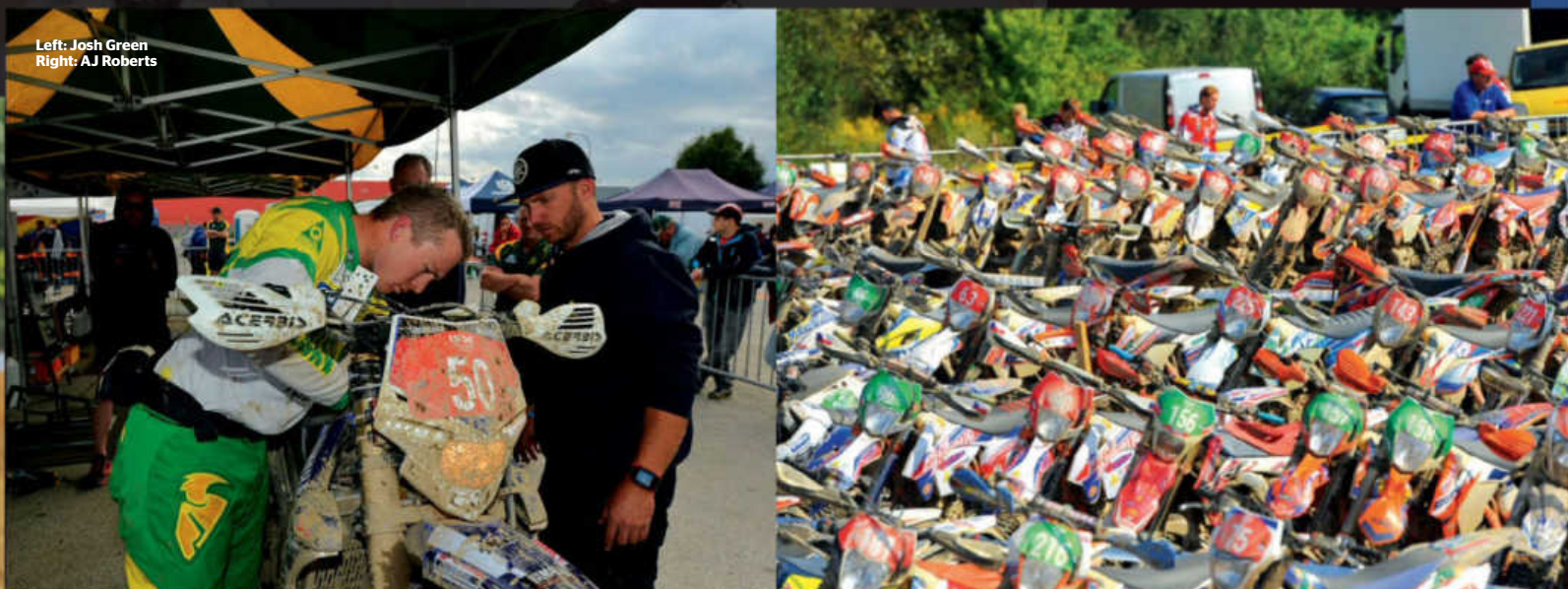
“I went and spoke to the FIM Live TV cameraman who I knew prior to the ceremony. I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell the riders. I said keep the cameras rolling on the podium no matter what, and they did. So right there on FIM live TV cameras kept rolling as our boys stood on the top podium chanting, ‘Aussie, Aussie, Aussie!’ The crowd lost their shit and went nuts.”

The Australians were wary of disrespecting the FIM; after all, they still wanted to be awarded the trophy. Mind you, they certainly weren't showing any respect to the French team. The Aussie boys walked off to a roaring ovation from the crowd. It didn't take long for the applause to turn into booing as the French stood atop the podium. It was evident that no one thought the French deserved it; the Aussies were the obvious champions.

Australian rider Lachlan Stanford believed that standing on the top podium was definitely the right decision for the team: “If we would've just got up on the second step and then two weeks later found out we've won, there'll be some tiny little article that no one will care about, whereas we made a really good statement.



Left: Josh Green  
Right: AJ Roberts



Left: Jemma Wilson  
Middle: Tayla Jones  
Right: Jess Gardiner

## WHAT DOES THE JURY MEAN IF YOU CAN JUST GET A LAWYER INVOLVED AND START SUING THE FIM ON THEIR DECISIONS?

We stood on the top step sort of in protest. It was a big stuff-up, but anyway we had a really good event; the Aussies did really well. The juniors and girls won and legally we won so could not ask for much better."

In another twist, the Australians then got fined for not staying on the podium. Why should they be charged for that considering all it takes is a lawyer for the decision to be overturned? Again, a very ugly precedent has been set should the FIM follow through with the provisional results.

### UNIVERSAL SUPPORT

As AJ said, the support from the other teams was second to none: "The Slovaks, Germans, Finns, Swedes and Italians all came and shook our hands to congratulate us on the win. The crowd even chanted, 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie! Oi! Oi! Oi!' as the French anthem was playing."

"When we were packing up the tent at the end of the day the whole Italian team, from cooks to mechanics, surrounded us, clapping and shaking our hands for standing up to the French. Everyone's intimidated by them, from journalists to riders, because they run the show."

From AJ's comments it becomes obvious that everyone knew the Aussies were hard done by. Aside from all the drama in the World Trophy, Australia cleaned up in Slovakia. We won the Walting trophy for the most improved team; we won the Junior Team Trophy and the Women's Team Trophy. We won everything we could. Individually, Daniel Milner finished second, Daniel Chucky Sanders finished first and Josh Green came in at fifth (behind three disqualified riders).

Unfortunately, none of these victories can be truly appreciated due to the controversy that took place. The French did themselves no favours and the reputation of the ISDE is in tatters. "At the end of the day, the guys did everything they could do to win it. They were ripped off. The sad part is they will get no credibility," said Roberts.

At the time of writing, I hope that justice will prevail and the decision will be overturned. We can only expect the FIM to follow a 90-year tradition. Rules are rules. Checkpoints are checkpoints. Nothing has changed, so why should the rules be bent for a fear of the French?

Said AJ Roberts, "At the end of the day, the truth is the truth. It got very messy. It got very political. It got very corrupt." **DAI**



# MOTO MANUAL

STUFF YOU NEED  
TO KNOW  
AND SOME STUFF  
YOU DON'T



## JAPANESE TWO-STROKE TRAIL BIKES

# 5 REASONS WE LOVE

**1** Riders “of a certain age” probably cut their teeth on a Japanese two-stroke – maybe even literally. It was hard to find anything else in the bush back in the day.

**2** Maintenance? What maintenance? The air filter’s clean, so what more do you want? Just fuel it up and click it into gear.

**3** Sticker kits were lightning bolts cut out of Gaffa tape. Some blokes put clear contact over the plastics to keep them looking fresh – no fancy factory replica sticker kits back then.



**4** You could pull a bike down in the bush with a handful of tools. Nowadays? Well, just forget it. Just trying to get to the spark plug is a half-day mission.

**5** For some reason there was a really cool period when nobody cared what you rode or how you dressed and these seemed to be the dominant bikes back then. As long as you were riding, the year model of the bike didn’t matter. And electric start was what you found on a hair dryer.



# DIRT SHOP

A SELECTION OF COOL STUFF WE FOUND THIS MONTH



## ▲ CANDEA LED BOTTLE

- Highly efficient micro LED with low energy consumption
- Highly visible for increased rider safety
- 3 different modes: high visibility, energy saving and blink
- Squeezable
- Capacity: 650mL



## ▲ NERF RIVAL BLASTER

- The new line includes two guns, the Apollo and the Zeus
- Apollo is a single-shot, spring-loaded blaster with a seven-round quick loading clip
- Zeus is a motorised blaster that holds almost twice as many balls and fires up to 100ft/s, which is roughly 110km/h
- Both guns skip the standard Nerf dart in favour of a small ball



## ▲ HUMPING PORTABLE CHARCOAL GRILL

- Compact and easy to use
- Maximises heat with only 3-5 pieces of charcoal
- Grill sits atop a fan to speed up heating process
- The fan can be powered via a smartphone or car outlet connection

## ▲ SLIDEN'JOY ADDITIONAL LAPTOP SCREENS

- Portable device that adds one or two full HD, lightweight screens to your laptop
- Displays work for both PC and Mac
- Screens slide in and out of a unit that sticks via magnets on the back of your laptop
- Aluminium hinges allow rotation up to 180 degrees
- Sliden'Joy screens come in 13-, 15- or 17-inch variations



## ▲ LEXUS HOVERBOARD

- Magnetic levitation to achieve frictionless movement
- 11.5kg weight including magnets and liquid nitrogen
- 32 superconductor bulks
- 50oz liquid nitrogen
- Natural bamboo
- Ultra-lightweight casing







#### THE CRICKET COOLER

- Combines an Esky with cricket stumps
- 33L capacity
- Cup holders for the wicketkeeper and batsman
- Wheels for easy transportation
- Stumps rotate 270 degrees for easy storage

#### MASTER PAN NON-STICK DIVIDED GRILL

- Easy to cook, easy to clean
- Multi-sectional design
- Non-stick and stain resistant
- No PFOA or heavy metals
- Heavy-gauge bottom distributes heat flow evenly



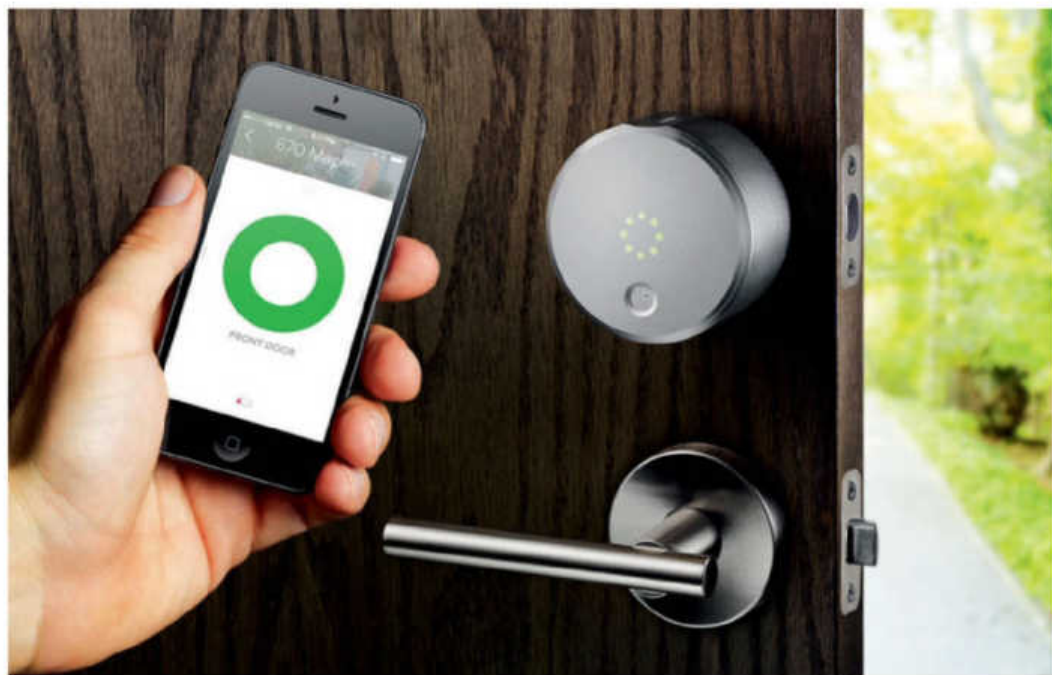
#### SESAME SMART LOCK

- Removes the need for keys with a simple app
- Sesame attaches straight onto your existing lock
- Allow anyone in from the palm of your hand
- Receive a notification whenever your door opens or closes
- Auto lock allows your door to automatically lock behind you
- Voice control to open on command
- Military-grade encryption



#### THORFIRE LED CAMPING LANTERN

- LED lantern provides a maximum of 125 lumens
- Can be pulled or stretched out to be a flood-style camping lantern or collapsed and used as a mini hand-cranked flashlight
- Hand crank for charging
- Cell phones, cameras and other USB devices may be connected and charged by hand in emergency situations





# JUNIOR NEWS

## YCF AUSTRALIA

### LIMITED-EDITION NITRO CIRCUS!

Everyone loves Travis Pastrana and now you can have a Nitro Circus-kitted bike built just for groms!

### YCF 50A PASTRANA LIMITED

Key Features of the 50A:

- \* 50cc 4-stroke electric start
- \* Fully automatic, 10in front wheel/10in rear wheel
- \* Low 550mm seat height & adjustable throttle for kids
- \* Lightest in class at 42kg

\* UPSD front forks and disc brakes front and rear

Limited model features:

- \* Yellow frame
  - \* Yellow plastics kit
  - \* N-style Pastrana Nitro Circus graphics kit
  - \* Yellow handgrips
  - \* Yellow bar pad
  - \* Red fuel line
  - \* Special Nitro chain guard stickers
- Ride away price: \$1690 with free training wheel promo pack until Dec 25, 2015



## 2016 KTM 65 SX

KTM has more than a strong grip on the 65cc race class and has more wins than it can count. The bike has received some awesome updates for 2016 to keep it up the front:

- New bodywork that mimics the full-size 2016 SX-F line that gives the 65 SX a slimmer profile for improved ergonomics and handling
- New slimmer seat with better grip
- New pipe and silencer for more power
- New cast-aluminium swingarm
- New chain guide, chain slider, rear axle and chain tensioners for better reliability
- Redesigned kickstarter
- New graphics to match the larger SX-F models

## KING COBRAS

Cobra bikes are well established in the USA and working hard to get a foothold here in Oz as well. Some pretty big names have spent time on Cobras, including Cooper Webb, Ryan Dungey and Eli Tomac, and the American brand that debuted in 1994 has gone from strength to strength.

While most manufacturers have all but given up on developing 50cc, Cobra continues to improve and refine the little engine and also keep its 65 up to pace with the very best.

To check out Cobra in Australia, head to [www.cobration.com.au](http://www.cobration.com.au) where you can purchase bikes, merchandise and parts right there online and get them shipped from Queensland.

The bikes are all made in-house and are claimed to be the only true American-made off-road bikes. They look pretty damn awesome but they also have a swag of wins to their credit.

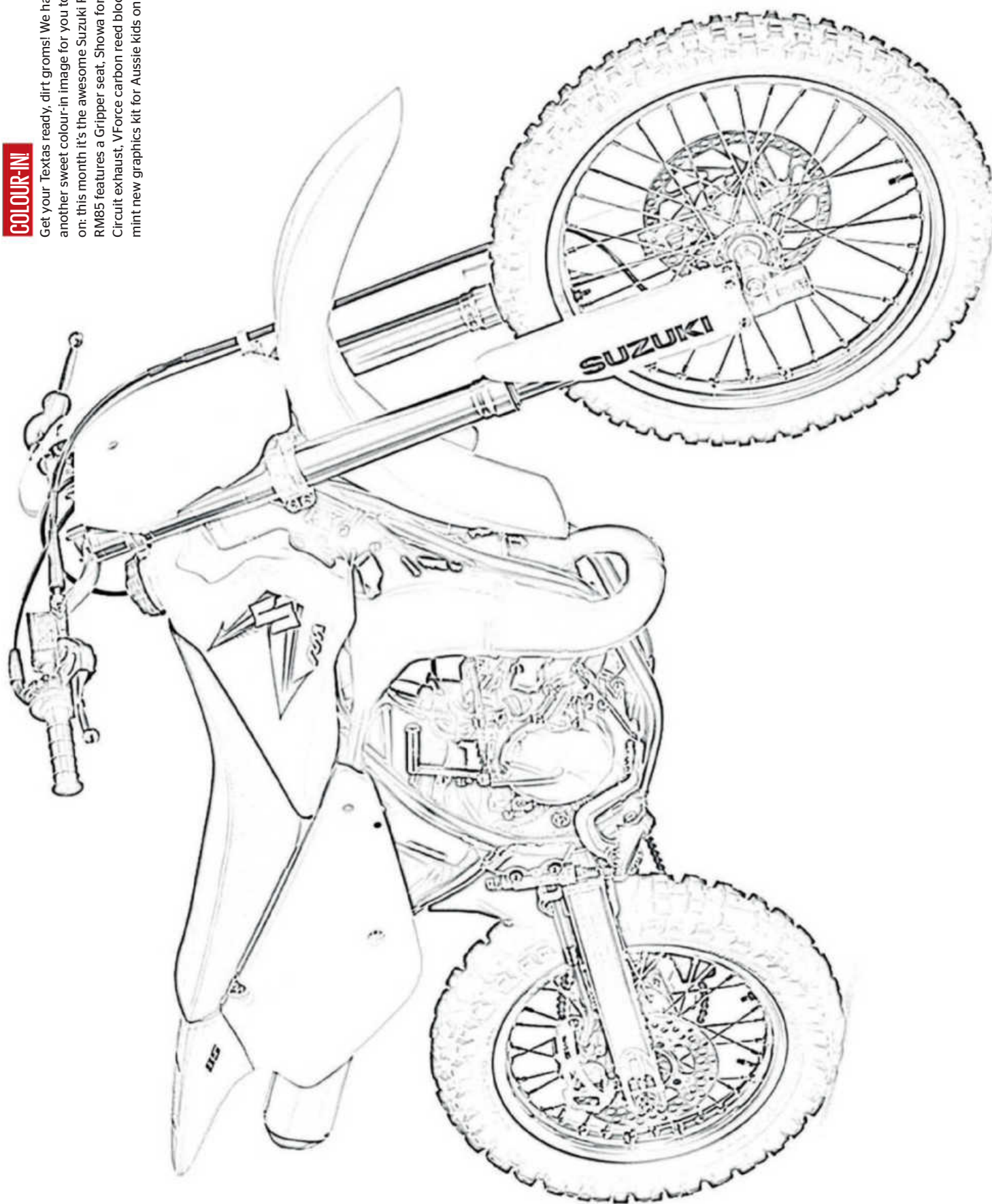
2016 Cobra CX50





## COLOUR-IN

Get your Textas ready, dirt groms! We have another sweet colour-in image for you to get busy on: this month it's the awesome Suzuki RM85. The RM85 features a Gripper seat, Showa forks, Pro-Circuit exhaust, VForce carbon reed block and a mint new graphics kit for Aussie kids only!







## DRIRIDER MULTI-TEK ADVENTURE JACKET

- 600D Polyester Oxford and rib stop with 500D full-flow mesh
- CE armour in shoulders and elbows
- Eva rubber back pad
- 100% waterproof and breathable detachable liner
- Full-length detachable thermal quilted liner
- Remove panels to convert to a mesh summer jacket
- Arm and waist adjusters for an optimum fit
- Pockets in both shells so you don't lose storage space when you convert
- 3M reflective for night-time safety
- Waist expander zips
- Connection zip for pants
- RRP \$419.95

## FORMA ADVENTURE TERRA BOOTS

- 12-month warranty if purchased in Australia
- Guaranteed perfect fit
- CE Certified quality
- Full-grain leather upper
- Drytex waterproof/breathable liner
- Adventure anti-slip/oil rubber sole
- TPU ankle shields for extra protection
- PU external shin, ankle and foot protection
- Personalised suede leather heat protector
- Adjustable Velcro cuff closure
- Unbreakable alloy buckles
- Padded inner lining
- Polyurethane nylon reinforcements
- Extra-soft polymer padding with memory foam
- ISS (Incorporated Steel Shank)
- Anti-bacterial replaceable footbed with APS
- High-quality produced 100% in Europe
- RRP \$399



## KTM RACE COMP JACKET

- Waterproof off-road enduro jacket
- PU coated
- Made from high-strength Dott 330D
- Waterproof, breathable membrane lining with sealed seams
- Removable micro fleece lining
- Ventilated mesh inner lining
- Shoulder & elbow protectors included
- Back protector pocket
- Detachable sleeves & large sleeve pocket
- Inside pocket with zip fastener for documents
- Two front pockets with storm flap
- Two vertical side pockets on the front
- Two chest pockets
- One pocket on left sleeve
- Asymmetric, concealed main zip fastener





WHERE THE BLACKTOP ENDS AND THE DIRT PICKS UP, THE WORLD BECOMES AN ADVENTURE PARK FOR THE FREE SPIRIT



### INTERPHONE IPHONE6 PRO CASE BAR MOUNT HOLDER

- **WATERPROOF IPX4** The Pro Case resists rain, snow and other similar events, also easy to handle in any kind of weather.
- **RECHARGES DURING USE** The Pro Case allows your phone to recharge while being used, even when it's raining.
- **SLIDELOCK CLOSURES** Equipped with lateral sliders (Slidelocks) that quickly position and lock the smartphone inside the case. The operation is simple to do and secure, even while wearing riding gloves.
- **SHOOTING VIDEOS & PHOTOS** You can shoot videos and photos while riding.
- **FUNCTIONALITY** Home button/touch screen/camera display.



### SCAGGS YAMAHA WR250R BILLET BIG RACK

- The ultimate commuter/trail/everything rack
- Mounting one of Givi's huge selection of high-quality Monokey top cases is easy and adds a priceless function to your extremely fuel-efficient WR250
- Slide it on, snap it down, you're off
- Key in, twist. Push button, pull the case back off. A simple component that will make your commute a breeze
- A Givi Monokey top case mounting kit is required and sold separately
- Mounting a RotoPax pack mount is easy with the simple integration of tapped holes in the rack itself, so mounting up a leak-proof RotoPax container takes seconds. Many competitors simply provide through holes to bolt the RotoPax pack mount on. Even though this works, getting it on or off would require removing the rack, complicating something that is not complicated. It's easily corrected on this rack with an intelligent design. Of course, the long bolts for my special mounting method are included with every single rack.



### KLIM FORECAST JACKET

The Forecast Jacket calls to riders looking for the ultimate in extreme-duty, ultra-lightweight shells. The Forecast features Gore-Tex Performance Shell construction, a durable mesh liner and intelligent bicep ventilation ports for a truly dry riding experience.

### MOTION PRO BEADPRO TYRE BEAD BREAKER & LEVER TOOL SET

- Innovative multi-use tyre tool set
- Breaks the bead on most street and off-road motorcycle tyres
- Integrated tyre spoons for tyre removal and installation
- Light weight and compact size are perfect for tool packs
- Length of each lever is 249mm
- Ergonomic handles with crossguard to keep hand from riding forward
- Forged 7075-T6 aluminium construction for strength and durability
- Black anodised finish
- Patent pending





# 5 TIPS TO CONQUER MUD HOLES

RUTS ARE AN INTIMIDATING CHALLENGE ON AN ADVENTURE BIKE. FILL THEM WITH MUD AND WATER AND THEY'RE EVEN MORE TECHNICAL. HERE ARE FIVE TIPS TO GET YOU OUT THE OTHER SIDE

STORY SHANE BOOTH

## 1. ASSESS IT

This may be something you can do without stopping or you may have to pull up and have a closer look. Either way, make an assessment as to whether it's something you can ride through or not; remember, getting an adventure bike bogged deep is something best avoided. You then have to choose the best rut to get you through and out the other end. If it looks borderline, take the time to stop and poke a stick into the water to check depth or even walk out if required.

## 2. WHICH RUT?

This is all about making life as easy as possible. Choose a straight rut — one that looks like it doesn't get too deep. You're also looking for where it leads to; make sure it gives you the best exit available from the mud hole. This is more important if the mud hole leads you into a bank. In that case, look for a smooth line that will offer the best traction as you ride out of the mud. Avoid ruts that veer off left or right or don't go the whole way through; a rut is actually your friend in this situation and will keep the bike straight, so pick one that runs all the way in and out.

## 3. LINE IT UP


Once you've selected which rut you're going to ride, make sure you line the bike up with it so both wheels flow straight

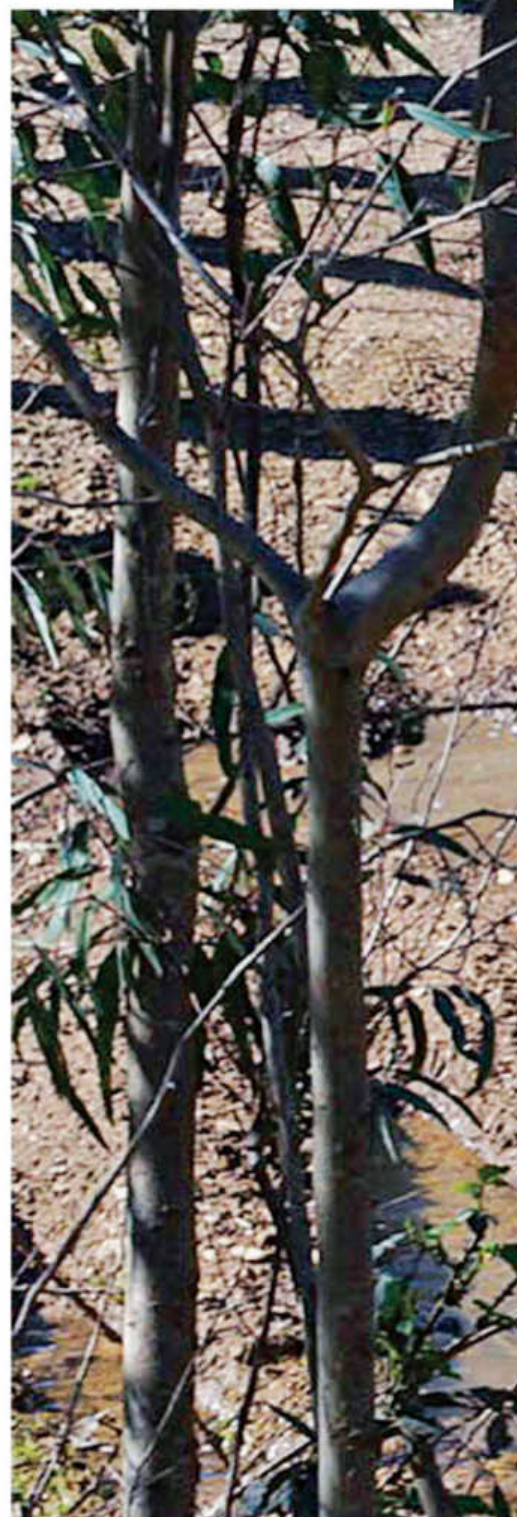
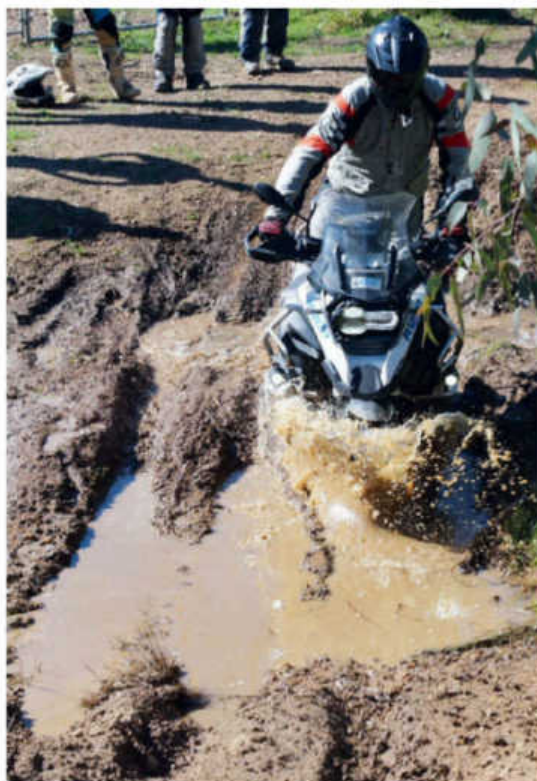
in. Don't change your mind at the last minute and end up getting cross-rutted — that's getting close to worst-case scenario for this situation. Pick your line and commit to it without a last-minute change of heart.

## 4. STAND OR SIT

This is totally up to the individual rider. Standing is ideal but only if you're comfortable; if you're not, sit down and get your feet out if that feels better. Standing offers better agility on the bike but you don't have your feet out, so generally it feels a little more intimidating. Sitting will work OK: it inspires a little more confidence because you can walk the bike through with your feet on the ground. Just be sure to keep the speed down if you're seated as any holes or bumps in the rut will unsettle you much more.

## 5. EASY ON THE THROTTLE

Traction will most likely be low so it's important to control the throttle input and try to avoid excessive wheel spin. It is probably a good idea to deactivate traction control for a scenario like this as you don't want it to intervene and cause you to slow too much on the way through. It's possible for that to happen if the base of the mud hole is very slippery. Slipping the clutch slightly as you ride through will help deliver the power to the rear wheel more delicately and limit wheel spin. 









# LONG DESCENTS

A LONG DOWNHILL SECTION OF TRAIL CAN BE DIFFICULT AND TIRING. HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO KEEP IT ALL UNDER CONTROL

STORY SHANE BOOTH PHOTOGRAPHY DAMIEN ASHENHURST

When you see the trail heading downhill and it looks like it will continue for some time, there are a few things you need to consider. Does it get steeper and does it offer up enough traction to control your speed? The other factor is fatigue, which can zap energy when you're riding downhill for long periods.

It's important to keep your vision up and scanning the terrain ahead so you can maintain the correct speed. It's very easy to carry too much speed into a long descent only to have the hill begin to fall away and get steeper. When this happens you can find yourself trying to slow the bike down, but that can be difficult when the hill is steep and generally traction is low. Keep your eyes forward and control your speed so you can bring the bike to a stop within your line of sight if necessary — if you do that, you're in total control. If you can't stop the bike within your line of sight it leaves you with the chance of riding into or off something you don't want to.

Keep a close eye on the terrain underneath you. When you're descending, traction is very important and on a long downhill it can change quickly. You need

to read the surface and try to pick it very early if it looks like there's a change of traction happening. It can get a little scary if you're heading downhill and the surface becomes loose; you may begin to build speed involuntarily. If it looks like it's getting a little sketchy, ease off the speed and check it out — it's much better to be safe than sorry. If you've ever been in the situation where you can't slow the bike on the downhill, you'll know it's a scary, horrible feeling.

It's better to stand if you can but that can also sap energy on a long descent. Experienced riders will probably find it easier to remain standing — it does allow you to shift your weight back more efficiently and also be more agile on the bike. The downside is it can wear you out. If the hill isn't too steep, like the one in this photo, you can remain seated without any major repercussions. The key is to keep your speed down if you're going to ride seated as you're less capable of dealing with the unexpected.

Long descents can catch you out, so keep your vision up and your speed down and keep a close eye on the surface underneath you. **DA**









## SET UP YOUR NEW RIDE

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH, YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF STARING DOWN A BRAND-NEW 2016-MODEL BIKE. HERE ARE 10 EASY TIPS TO GET IT READY TO HIT THE TRACK

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY SHANE BOOTH

### ADJUST YOUR HANDLEBAR POSITION

Most bikes now have several handlebar clamp positions available to the rider. Be sure to try some of the different positions; this may require you to flip the handlebar clamps around if they are offset — some bikes will have two separate mounting positions in the top triple clamp. Either way, you won't know if there's a better position for you unless you try it.

### ADD TEFLON TAPE UNDER YOUR PERCHES

This is a cheap insurance policy to your clutch and brake perches and levers. Remove your front brake and clutch perches, then wrap Teflon plumbing tape several times around the handlebar where the perch mounts. Fit the perches again and this will allow you to tension the perches enough so they won't move while you're riding, but in a crash they'll spin out of the way, hopefully saving your perch and lever from breaking.

### SET YOUR TYRE PRESSURES

Check what the manufacturer recommends in the manual but it will usually be somewhere around 13-15psi. With standard tubes, 14psi or 15psi will help avoid pinch flats. The correct tyre pressure can make a huge difference to the way your bike feels on the track.

### SET YOUR SUSPENSION CLICKERS

Reset all your suspension clickers to the standard specs in your user manual. It's not uncommon for the suspension clickers to be all over the place when the bike comes out of the crate. A simple reset to standard specs ensures that everything is where it should be and gives you a good base setting to work from.







### ADJUST LEVER POSITION

Adjust your levers to suit you! Remember, you can also move the levers in on the handlebars, too. This will get you using the lever more towards the end rather than right in the pivot point, giving you a lighter pull and better feel. Also, get the rotation correct — a slight downward angle usually suits most riders.

### WIRE YOUR GRIPS

Wire your grips on using a thin-gauge stainless-steel wire. Three separate strands of wire per grip will do the trick: each end and one in the middle. Go around the grip twice each time, then twist the wire to get it tight. Be sure to tuck the cut-off section back into the grip so you don't stab your hand with it.

### CHECK YOUR AIR FILTER

This can be a costly mistake, so it's worth checking. Depending on where your bike has come from, your air filter should be serviced and ready to roll, but just check it's oiled and installed correctly before you ride your new pride and joy. It's a quick check that could save some major hassles!

### SET YOUR RIDER SAG

Some user manuals will give you a very good rundown on how to set the rear shock's preload correctly for each specific rider. Getting this right or as close to correct as possible will make a huge difference to how the bike handles. Too much and the bike could be difficult to turn; too little and it may become unstable. Get this right before you even start to think about how your bike is handling.

### SET YOUR REAR BRAKE PEDAL & GEARSHIFT LEVER

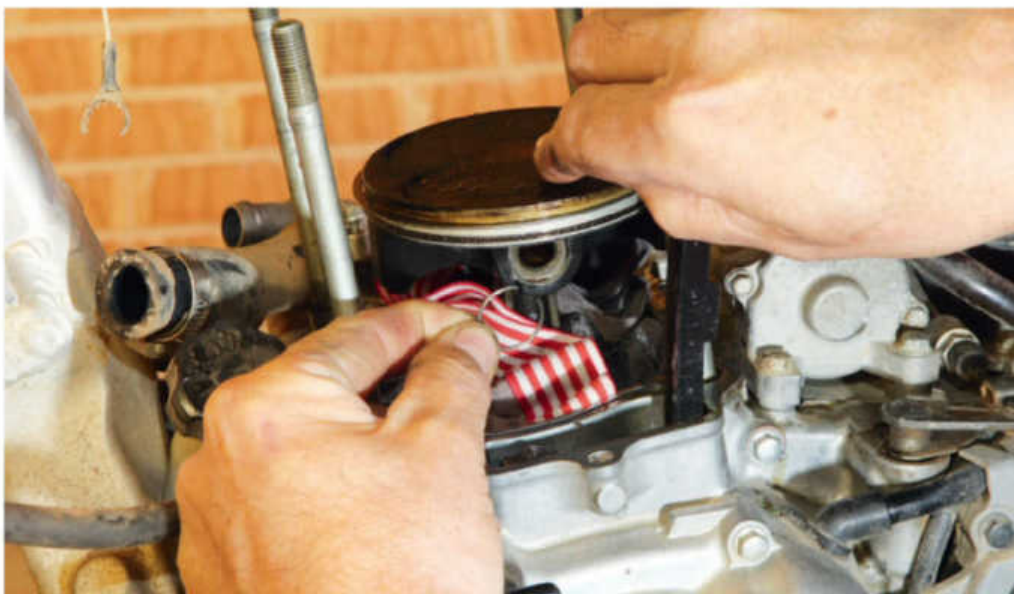
Make sure your rear brake and gearshift lever are in the correct position. Don't just assume they're in the right place because it's a new bike. As a general rule, your shifter should be pretty much level with your footpeg and the rear brake pedal just slightly lower. It will always differ between riders but start there and see what works best for you.

### ADJUST YOUR CHAIN

Check the chain adjustment specifications in your owner's manual and be sure it's adjusted correctly. If it isn't it can be a costly exercise for both you and the bike.







## TACKLING THE TOP END #2

PISTON, CHECK. RINGS, CHECK. VALVES, CHECK

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY MAX SULLIVAN

Part 1 showed you the preparation and checks leading up to a top-end rebuild. Now let's look at how it all comes apart. Follow the workshop manual and in no time you'll have your engine apart ready for a more thorough inspection.



### ROCKER BYE BABY

With the cam sprocket and cam chain removed from the end of the camshaft, it's time to remove the cam and rocker assembly. There are four bolts holding the assembly to the cylinder head. Loosen the bolts in a criss-cross pattern to avoid tension on one side that could lead to a warped cam holder. Once the bolts are out, lift up the assembly, being careful not to let the inlet buckets fall or drop shims.



### SHIMMY SHIMMY

The inlet valves have the shims sitting on top, held in position by the valve spring retainer. A bucket is over the top of the shim/valve assembly and the camshaft lobe presses onto the bucket. The exhaust valve doesn't use a bucket but does have a rocker arm that transfers the cam lobe pressure to the top of the shim/valve. Use a magnet to draw the shim out of the spring retainer and make sure you have all four. A shim that falls into an engine can spell disaster!



### CARBY ACCESS

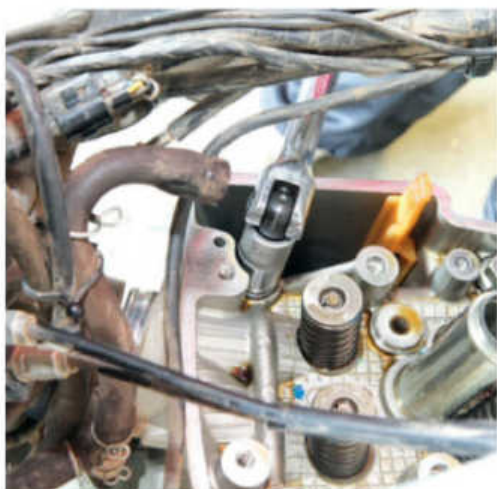
The carburetor needs to be removed but access is a little tight. You can make life a lot easier by lifting the subframe. Remove the two side/lower bolts and loosen the two top bolts. The sub frame will now pivot up and give you much greater access to the carburetor. Make sure you loosen the front and rear carby clamps first. You can either work with the carburetor pulled back away from the cylinder head or remove it altogether for cleaning.



### SIDE BAR

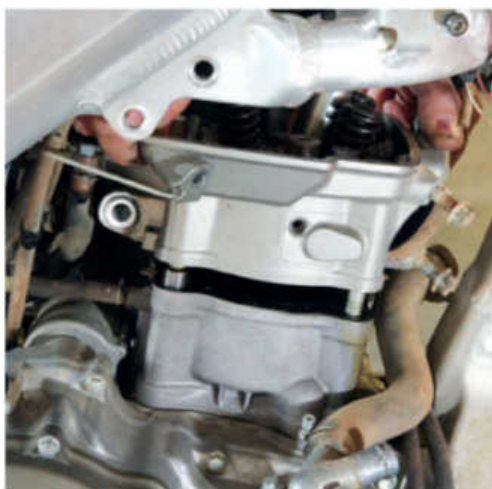
To remove the head, the four main head bolts need to be removed. However, there are two small 6mm bolts on the side of the cam chain tunnel. Loosen these two bolts first so the main pressure release doesn't cause any warp to the cylinder head when the main bolts are loosened. Notice a single bolt under these two that goes from the cylinder to the crankcase. This bolt also needs loosening prior to the main head bolts.





### CRACKER JACK

Now it's time to crack off the head bolts. I say crack since these will be very, very tight. A breaker bar is better to use than a cheap ratchet as the pressure can sometimes break a substandard tool. Crack each nut just a bit then go diagonally to the next one. Work around them several times till the nuts are loose and come off easily. Don't forget the washers under the nuts.



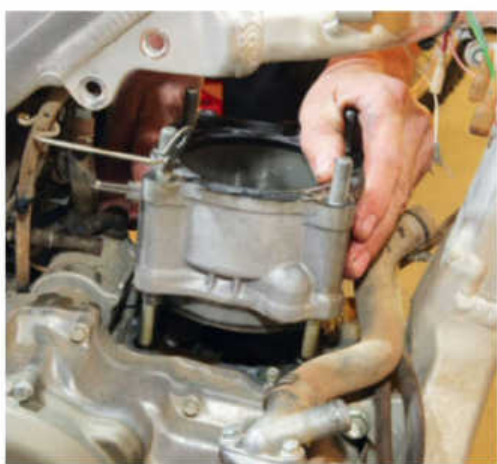
### OFF WITH HIS HEAD

With the head nuts and washers removed, you can now lift up the head. Take care that the cam chain isn't gathered up and catching the side of the cam chain tunnel. There's a water pipe at the front of the head that actually needs removal to allow the head an easy exit from the perimeter frame. A new O-ring is in our gasket kit, so it can be replaced when the head is reassembled on the engine.



### RED ROVER

Remember last month when I mentioned a rusty spark plug? Can you see what's on top of the piston? The red specks are rust from the old spark plug. It's amazing how much fell into the engine. This is why it's a good practice to slightly crack your spark plug then blow down on top of it with compressed air prior to removal. If it happens to be rusty around the outside, you can see how much can fall into a delicate engine. This amount of rust can cause some serious issues.



### LIFT-OFF

Before lifting the cylinder off, remove the two dowel pins so they don't go astray. Always take notes on dowel pins and their location. More often than not there are two, but sometimes they're diagonally opposite each other while other times they're side by side. Now gently work the cylinder up, keeping your hand under the bottom of the cylinder to stop the piston flopping out, hitting the crank case and being damaged.



### DINNER PLATE

The modern piston is often referred to as being like a dinner plate: flat, with bugger-all skirt. The short skirt reduces friction and increases the speed with which the engine can accelerate but can wear out quicker. Now is a good time to firmly hold the piston and connecting rod to feel for any big end wear. Rocking the piston sideways might show up little end wear. There are more precise ways of measuring both but over time you get a good feel for it.



### ONE-HIT WONDER

To remove the piston, you need to take out one of the gudgeon pin (piston pin) clips. Use a pick or small screwdriver to flick out one end of the clip near the cut-out in the piston. Put a finger over the clip to stop it flying out. Stuff a rag down the crankcase under the piston so the clip doesn't fall into the engine. These clips are single use only, so never, ever reuse them. If you drop it — find it! You must be sure it hasn't landed inside the engine.







# BUSH BOINGERS

## WE HEAD TO AXIS MOTORSPORTS FOR THE BIGGEST CHANGE YET

STORY DAMIEN ASHENHURST PHOTOS DAMO & SNEDDO

WHAT THE AXIS GUYS MANAGED TO ACHIEVE WAS TO KEEP THE BIKE MORE SETTLED WHILE MAINTAINING ITS ACCURATE STEERING

**T**he YZ125 enduro is coming together nicely and I have to say it's a pretty bloody easy bike to work on and find parts for — an advantage that comes from the longevity of the model, I guess.

This month I had something done that I knew was always going to need to happen and turned to the best in the biz for the work. I rolled the YZ into Axis Motorsports with stock suspension and rolled it out with a tuned front and rear, ready for the bush and happier to accommodate my weight. The guys fitted new springs, better-

quality oil and sorted the sag so all I had to do was ride.

But then the temperature hit 38 degrees and I couldn't find anyone to ride with me. I don't mind riding in the heat but I don't know many other blokes who do. Then the rain came — and it came big time. Finally, the day came when we had a perfect morning and a sprinkle of rain later in the day. Game on!

We went to a familiar track that has everything you could want, from fast open sections to tight single-trail and a few hills. It was pretty slippery in parts but a great track to gauge how the YZ would feel with new legs.

Because I ride this track a lot, it's easy for me to get a feel for how it felt compared to stock and I'll start by saying this: I didn't hate the stock setup. It wasn't super versatile for bush conditions but as a stocker it's pretty bloody good.

What the Axis guys managed to achieve was to keep the bike more settled while maintaining its accurate steering; it isn't all soft and wallowing. The front felt plusher but didn't cave in through G-outs and you could still hit logs and ruts at speed. While the rear was a still a little lively for me, I hit the clickers to settle it and it was bang-on. I like a dead feel at the back but it's a tricky balance with such a light bike. I reckon it's pretty much spot-on for my style and where I ride, though.

So there's a fair few hours on the bike now and I'm yet to see a single breakage, crack or failure. It really is a simple bike to live with. The Michelin Starcross tyres have worn really well, too. They look like they've hardly been used even though that rear cop has a pounding on the 125.

The bike had never been hard to start. It's so easy to work on and maintain and while I still haven't got my big hill climb technique right it's just fun from start to finish. It's also friggin' fast in single-trail and I can guarantee there's no way I could ride a 450F faster.

It can tire you out sometimes because there's just so much to think about and it can jump about a bit on certain tracks but, man, when you get the simplest thing right it's the best feeling in the world. Especially if you find a nice rutted corner and just tip it in and hammer it out with the perfect amount of revs.

It's pretty hard to beat — and that's why we're loving the YZ so much. **DAW**





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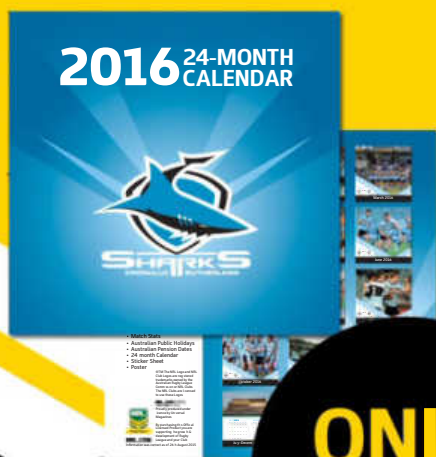
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